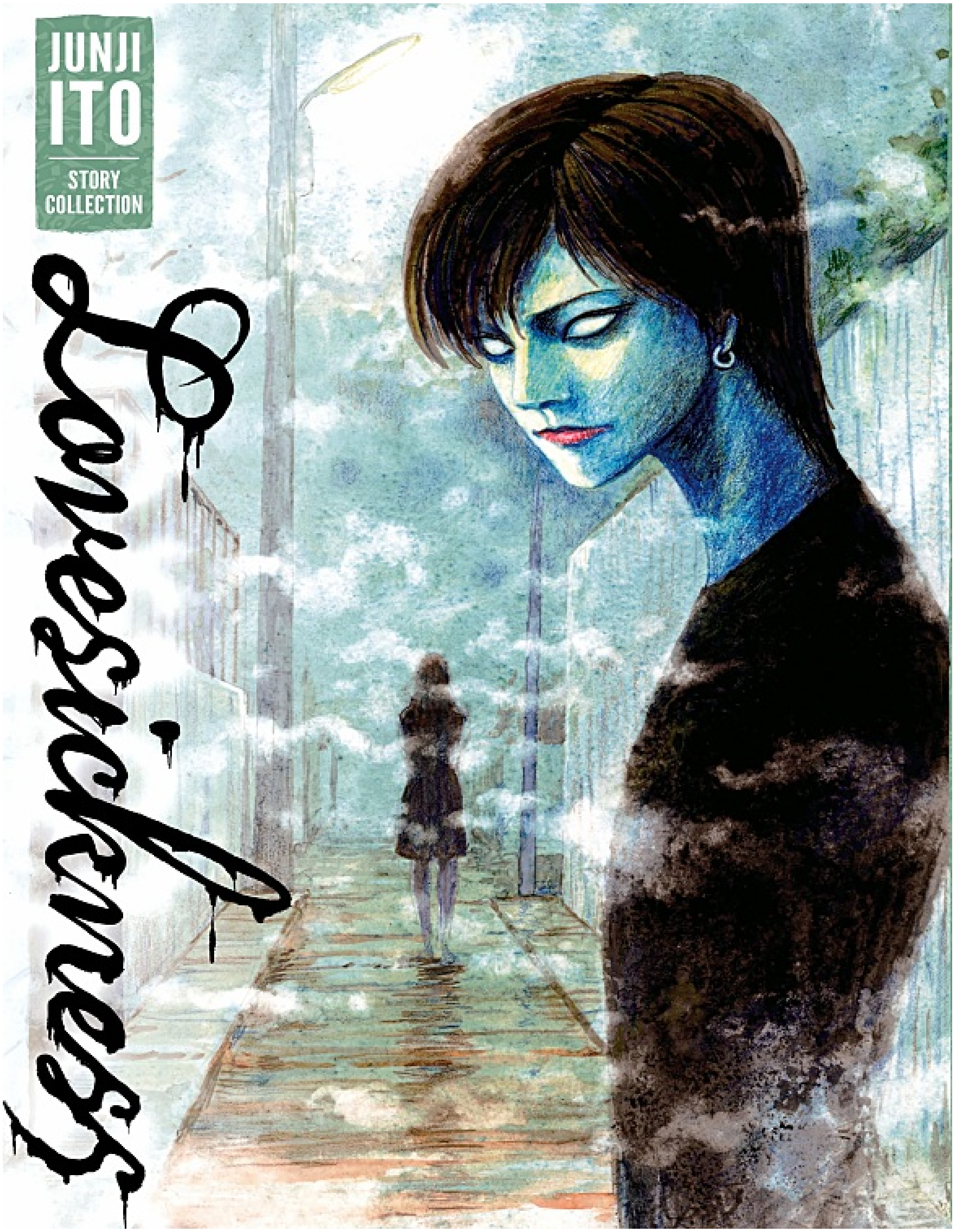
JUNJI
ITO

STORY
COLLECTION

Lovesickness


JUNJI ITO
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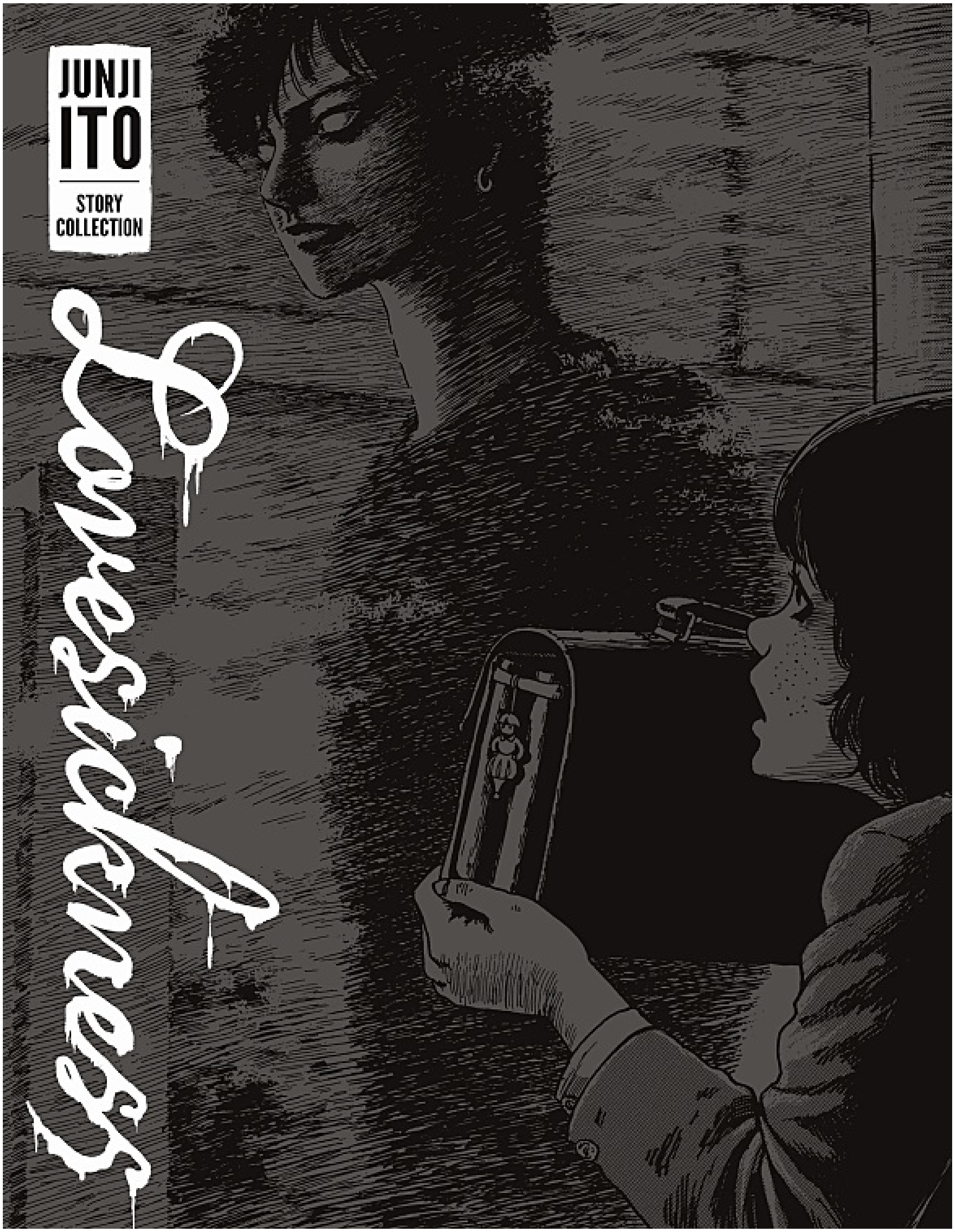

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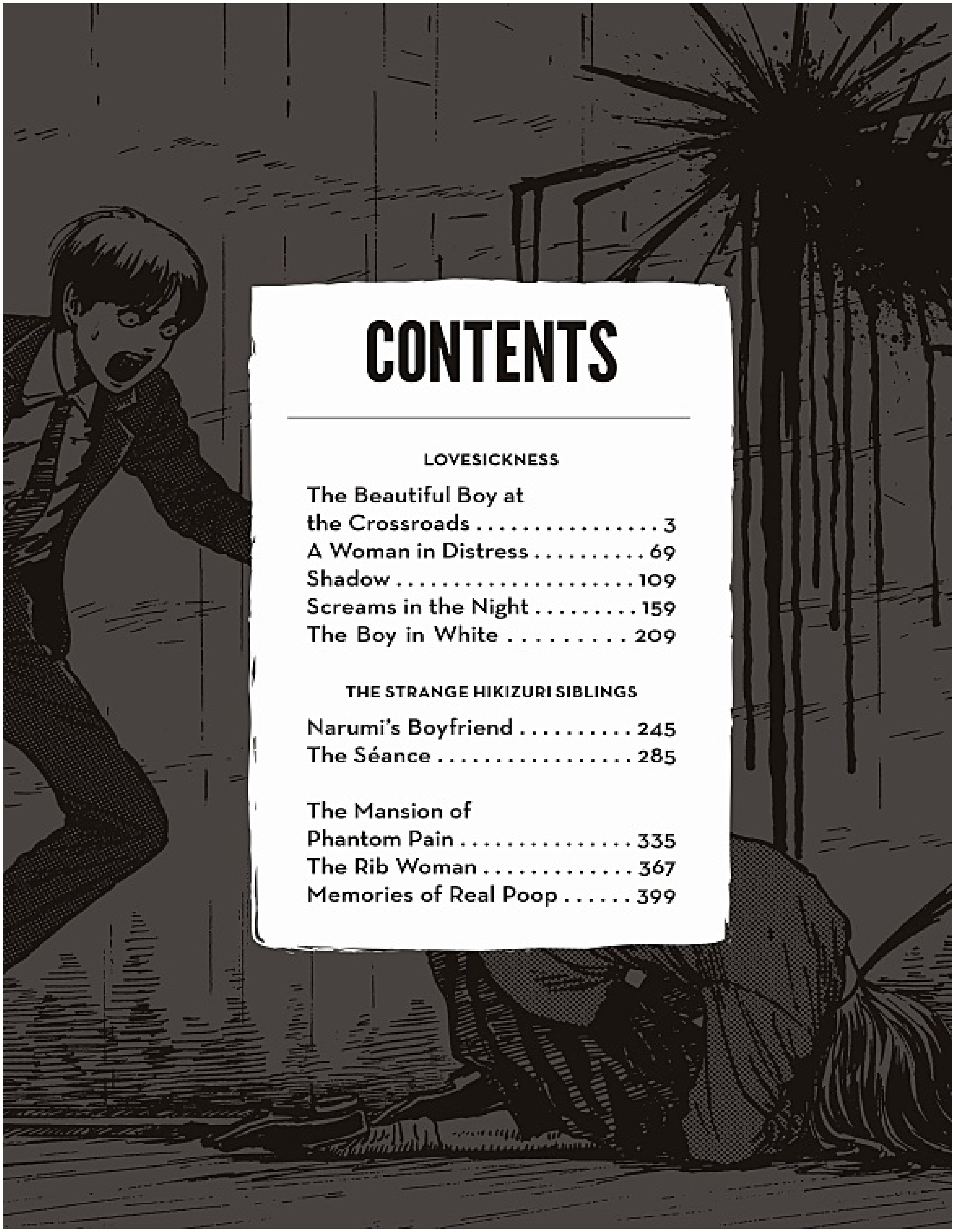

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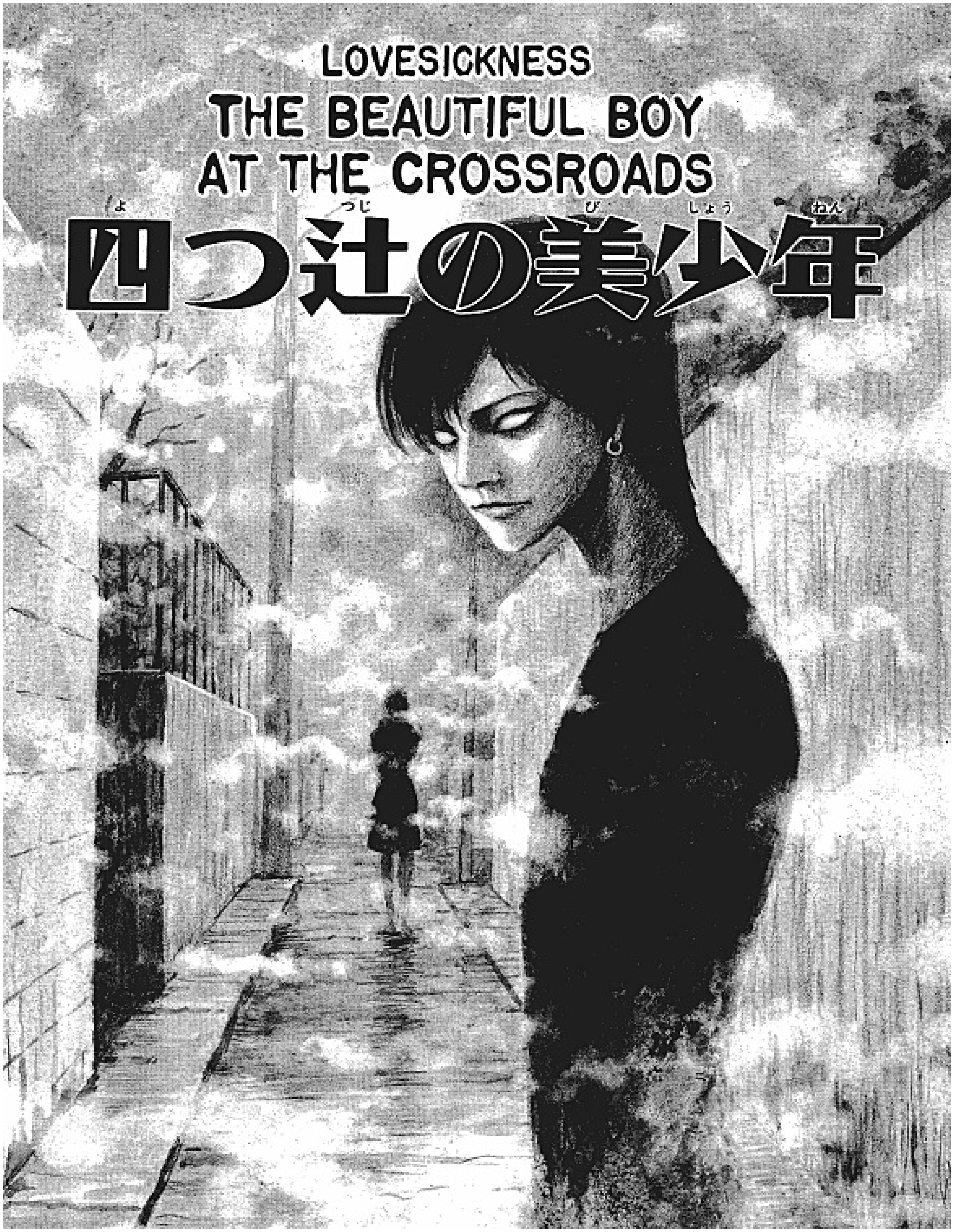
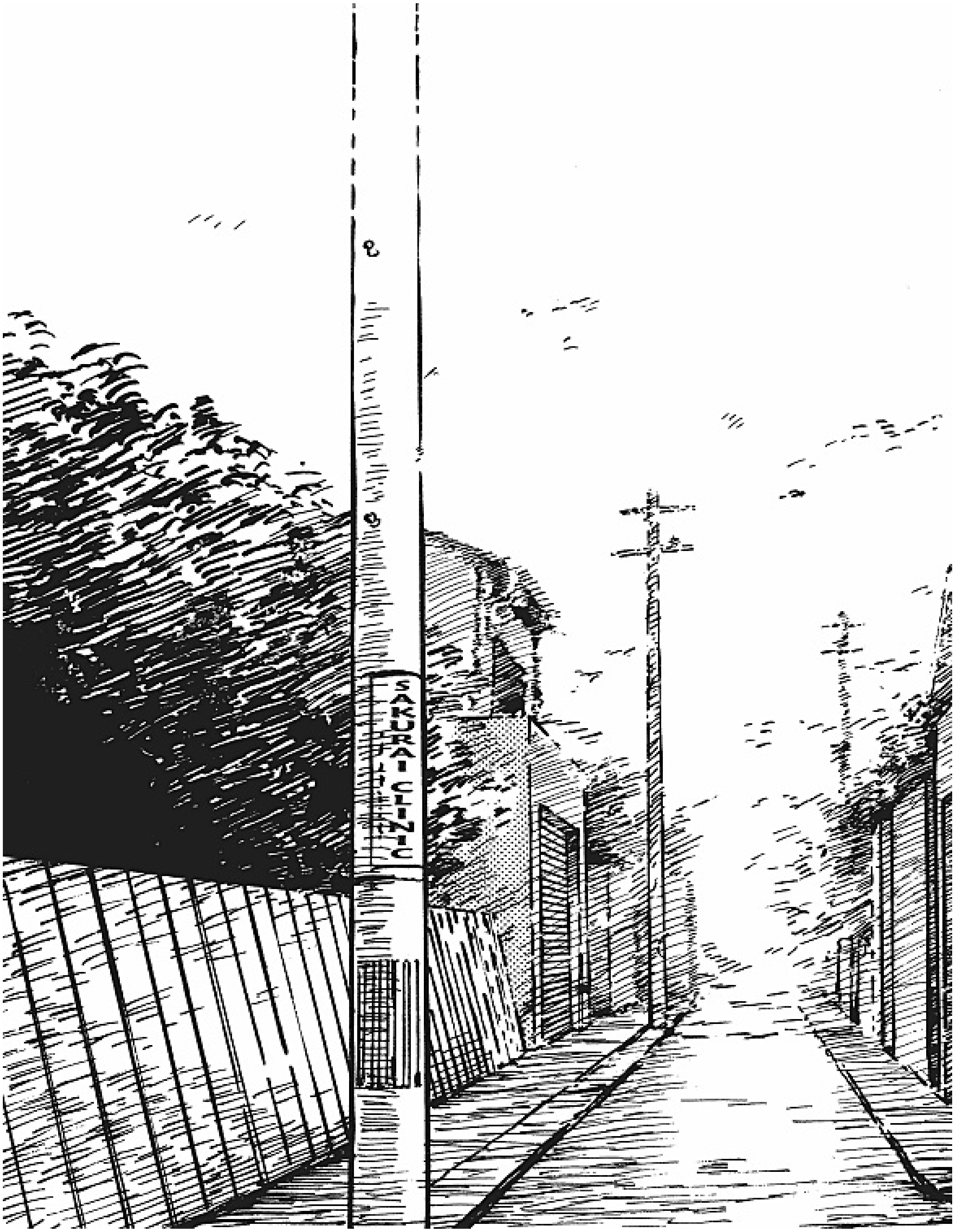
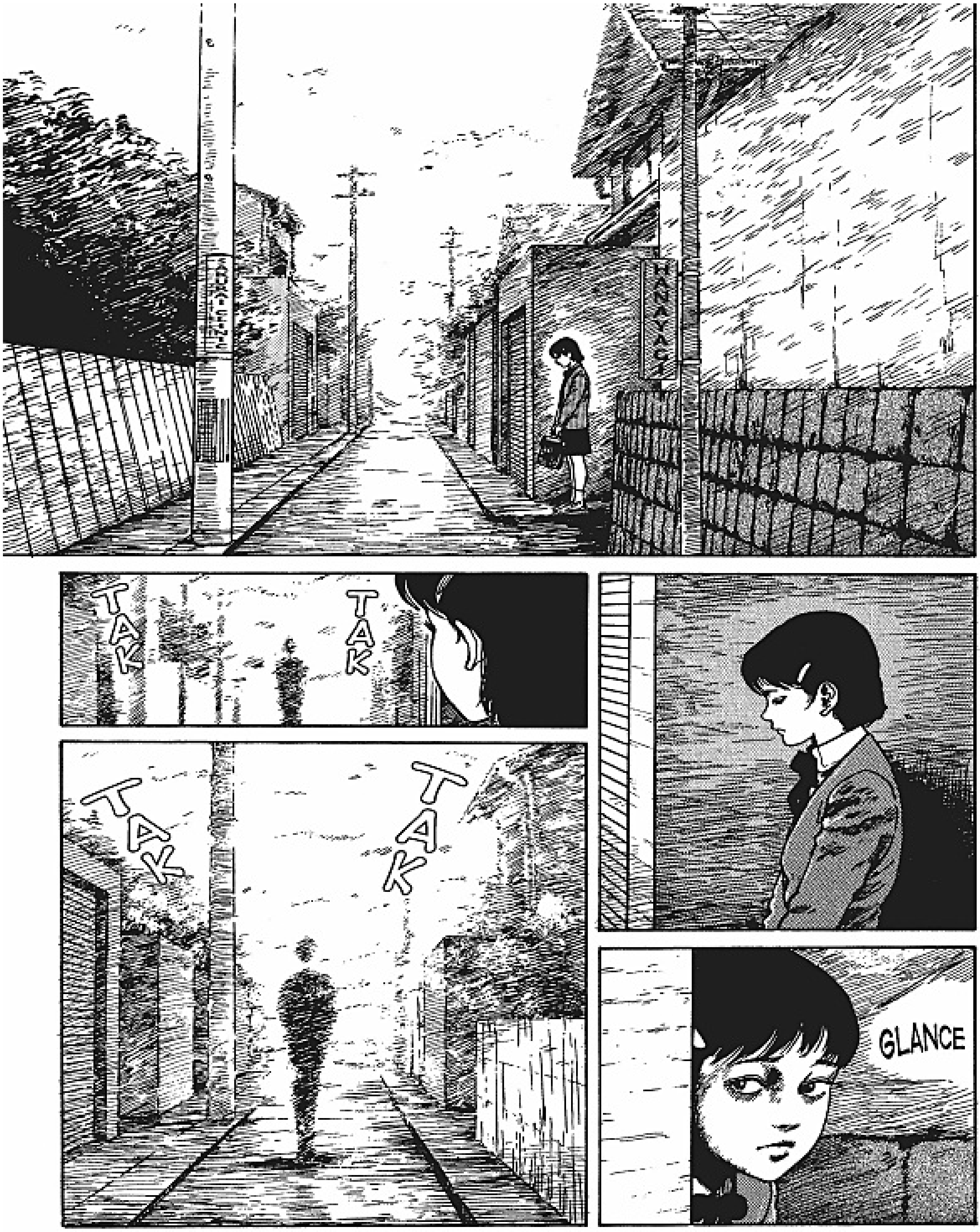
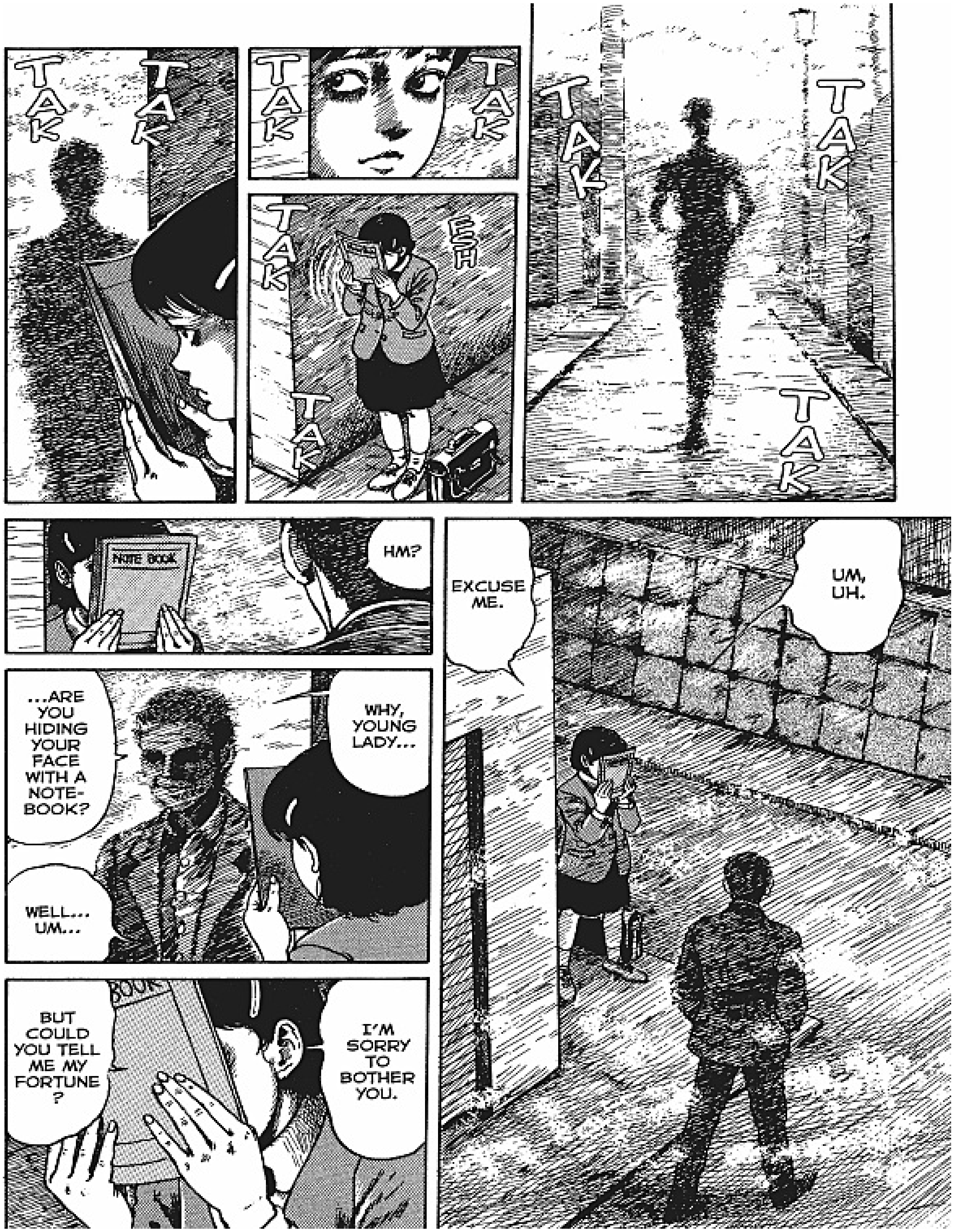
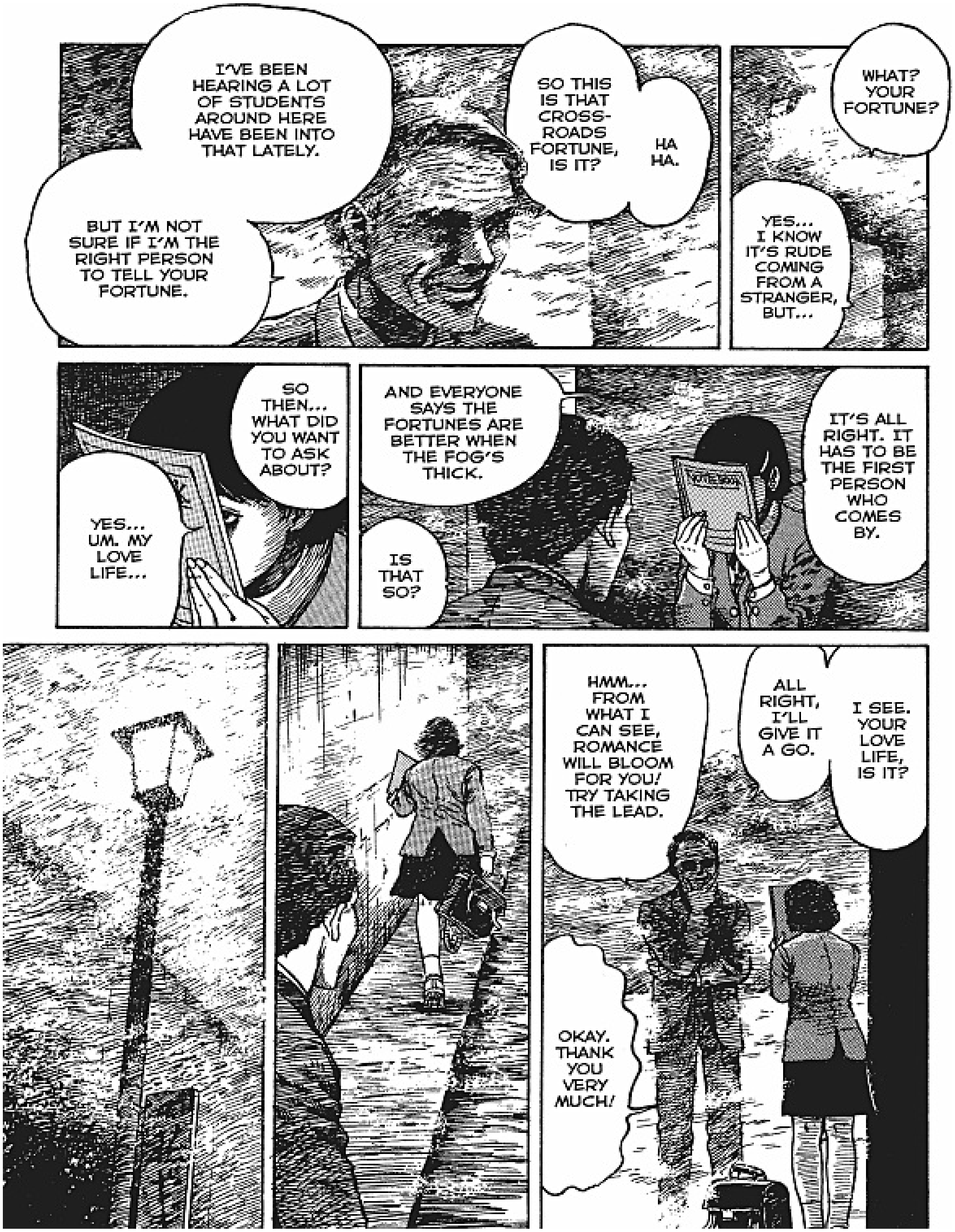
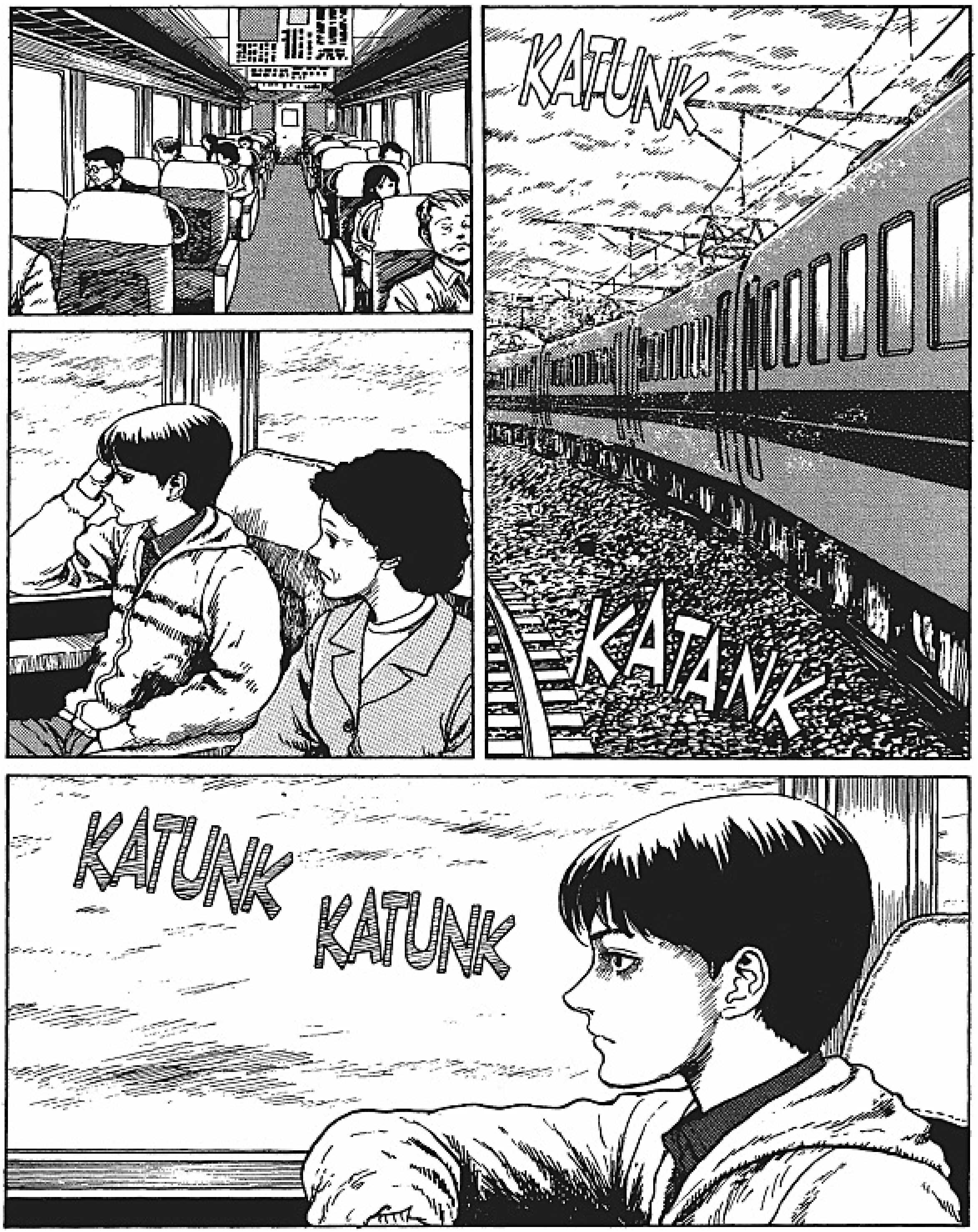

LOVESICKNESS
THE BEAUTIFUL BOY AT THE CROSSROADS
四つ辻の美少年
よ つじ び しょう ねん

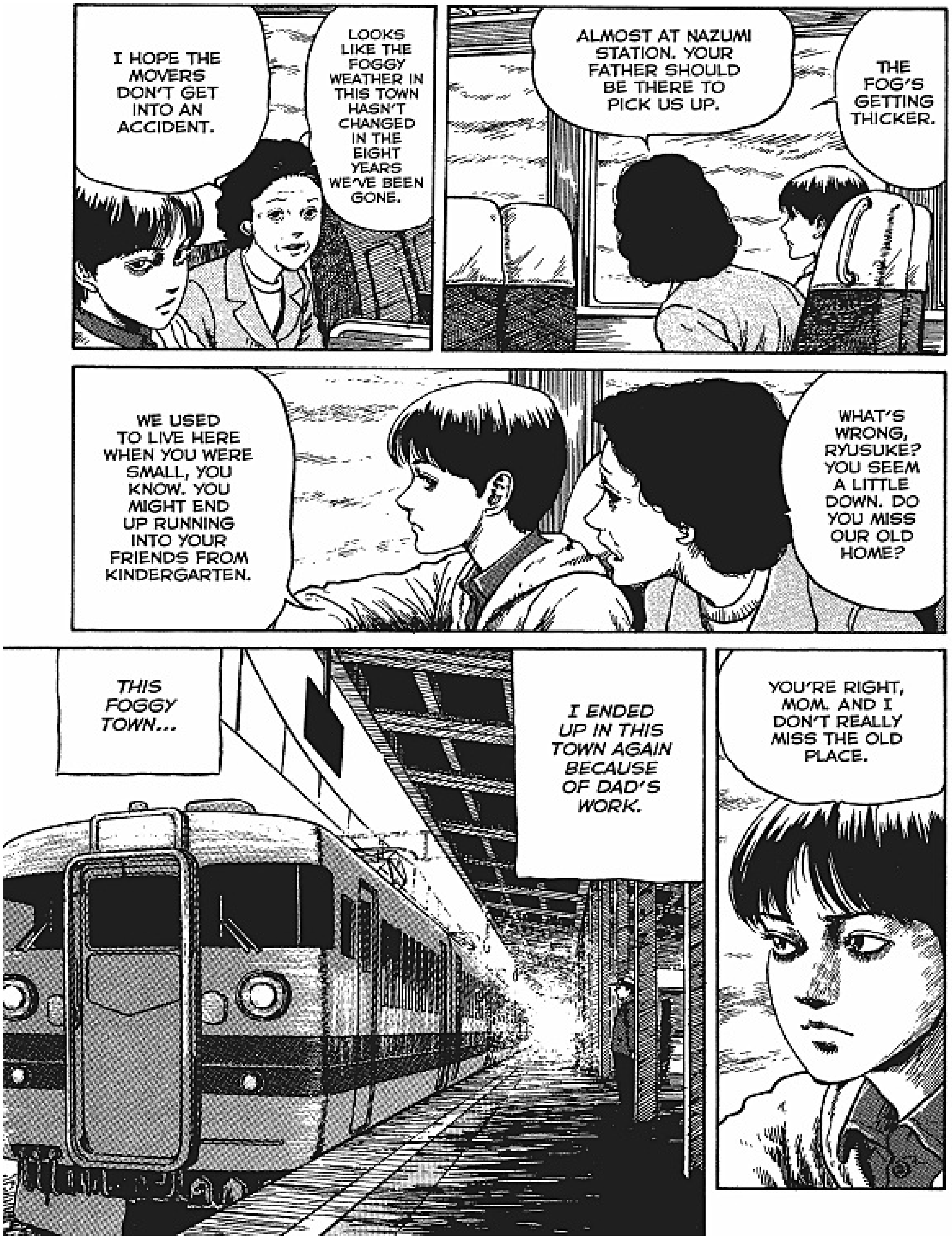

SAKURAI CLINIC

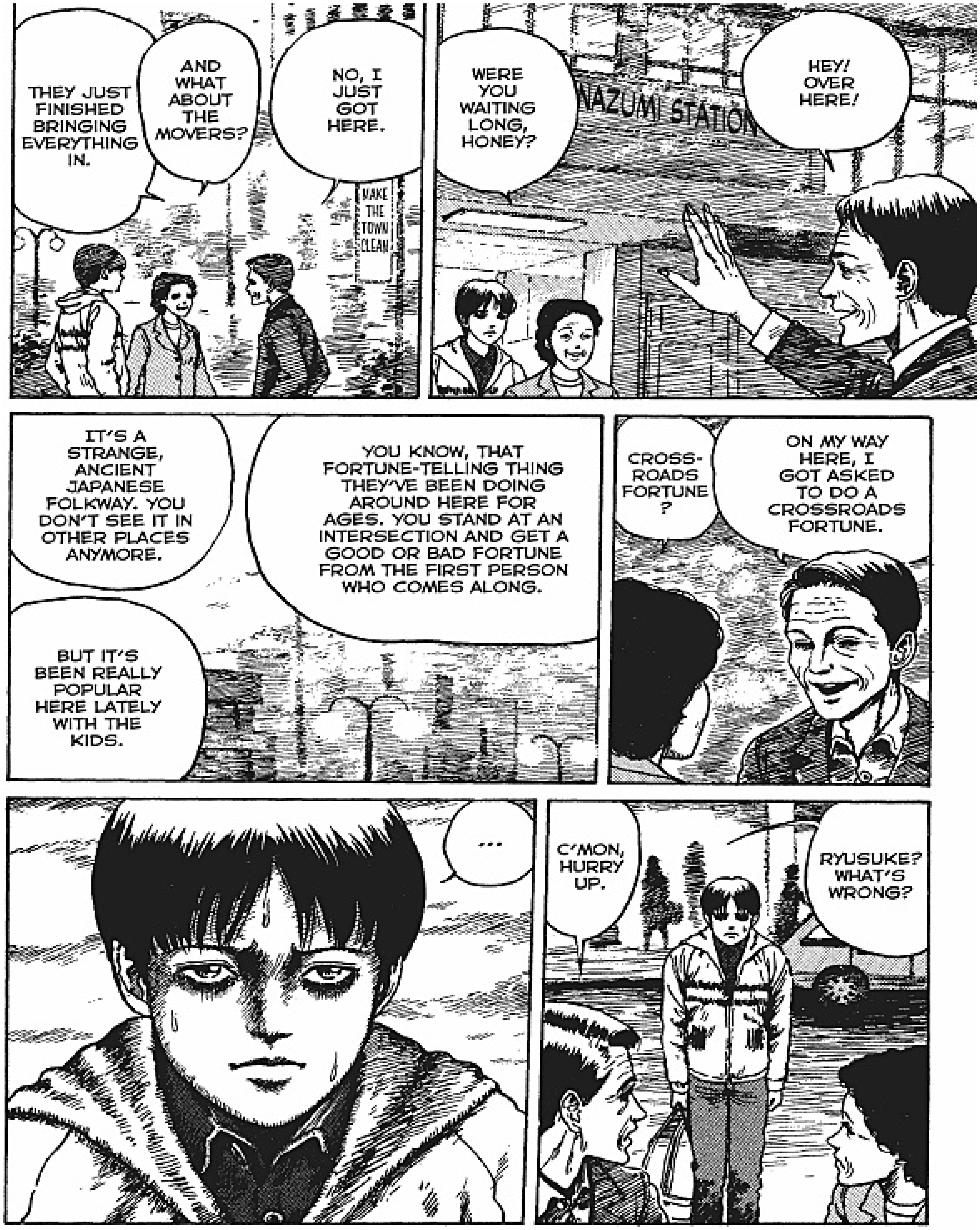

HANAYAGI
TAK
TAK
TAK
TAK
GLANCE

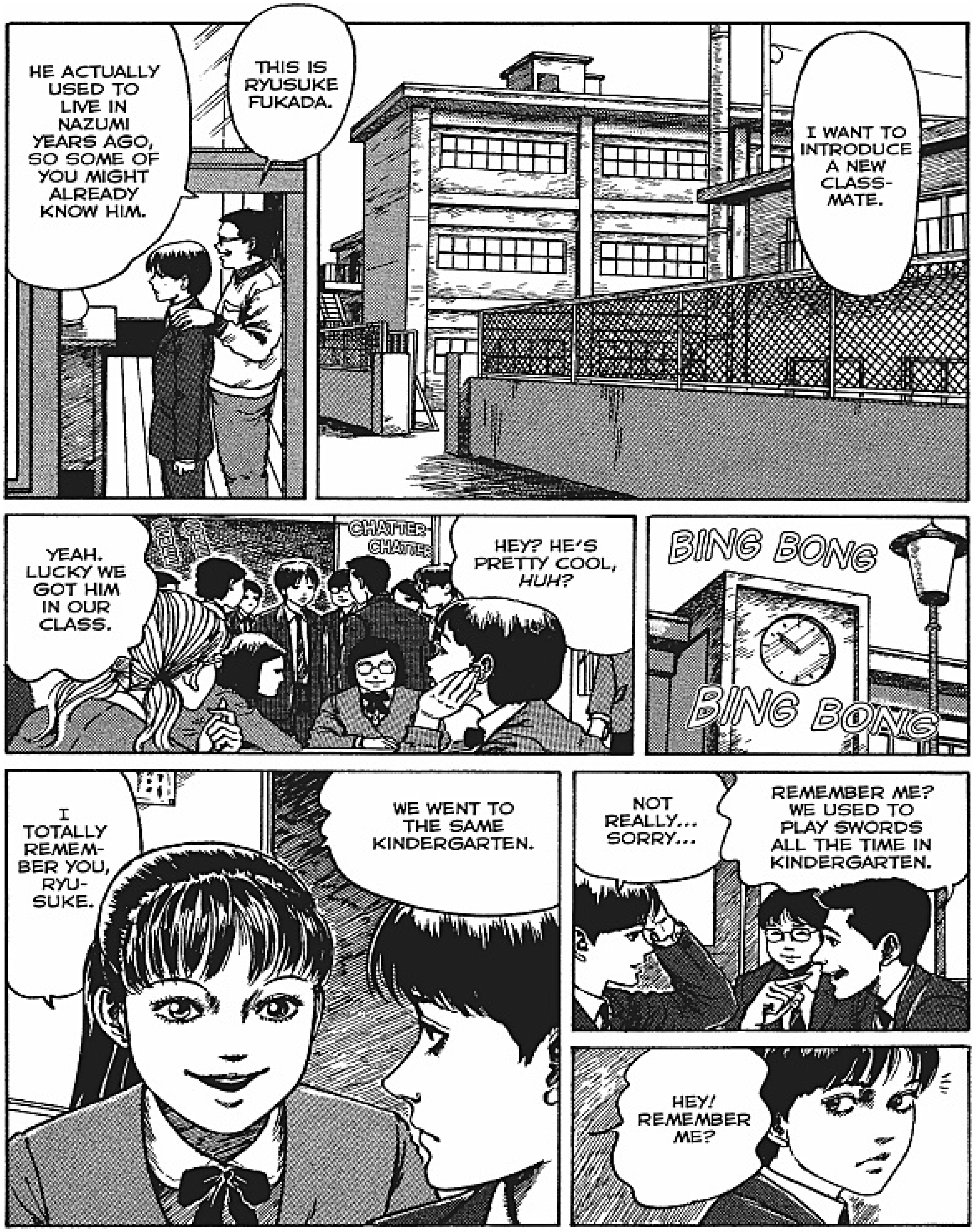

TAK TAK
TAK TAK
TAK TAK
TAK TAK
EH
TAK TAK
TAK TAK
UM, UH.
EXCUSE ME.
HM?
NOTE BOOK
WHY, YOUNG LADY...
...ARE YOU HIDING YOUR FACE WITH A NOTE-BOOK?
WELL... UM...
I'M SORRY TO BOTHER YOU.
BUT COULD YOU TELL ME MY FORTUNE?
BOOK

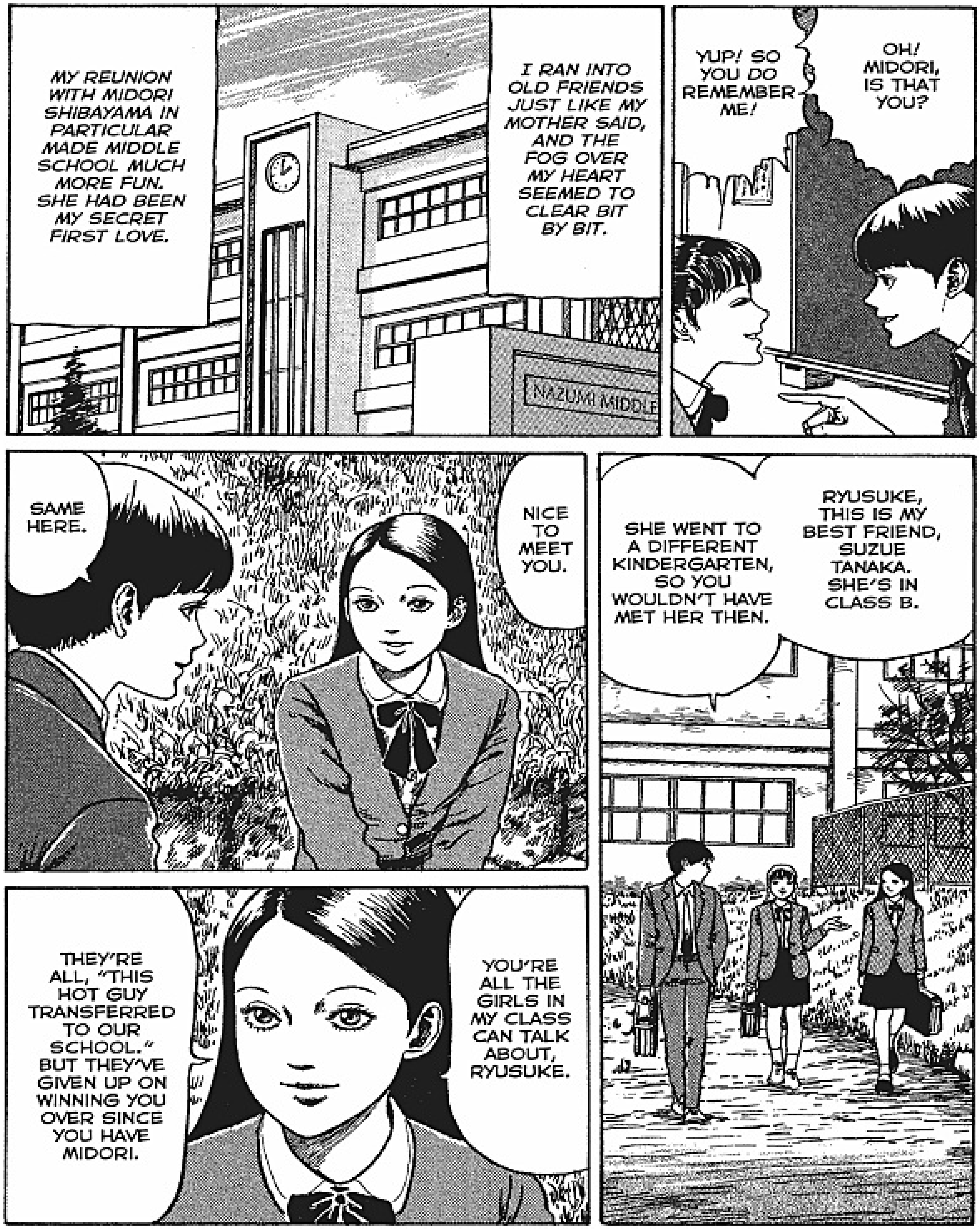

WHAT? YOUR FORTUNE?
YES... I KNOW IT'S RUDE COMING FROM A STRANGER, BUT...
SO THIS IS THAT CROSSROADS FORTUNE, IS IT?
HA HA.
I'VE BEEN HEARING A LOT OF STUDENTS AROUND HERE HAVE BEEN INTO THAT LATELY.
BUT I'M NOT SURE IF I'M THE RIGHT PERSON TO TELL YOUR FORTUNE.
IT'S ALL RIGHT. IT HAS TO BE THE FIRST PERSON WHO COMES BY.
AND EVERYONE SAYS THE FORTUNES ARE BETTER WHEN THE FOG'S THICK.
IS THAT SO?
SO THEN... WHAT DID YOU WANT TO ASK ABOUT?
YES... UM. MY LOVE LIFE...
I SEE. YOUR LOVE LIFE, IS IT?
ALL RIGHT, I'LL GIVE IT A GO.
HMM... FROM WHAT I CAN SEE, ROMANCE WILL BLOOM FOR YOU! TRY TAKING THE LEAD.
OKAY. THANK YOU VERY MUCH!

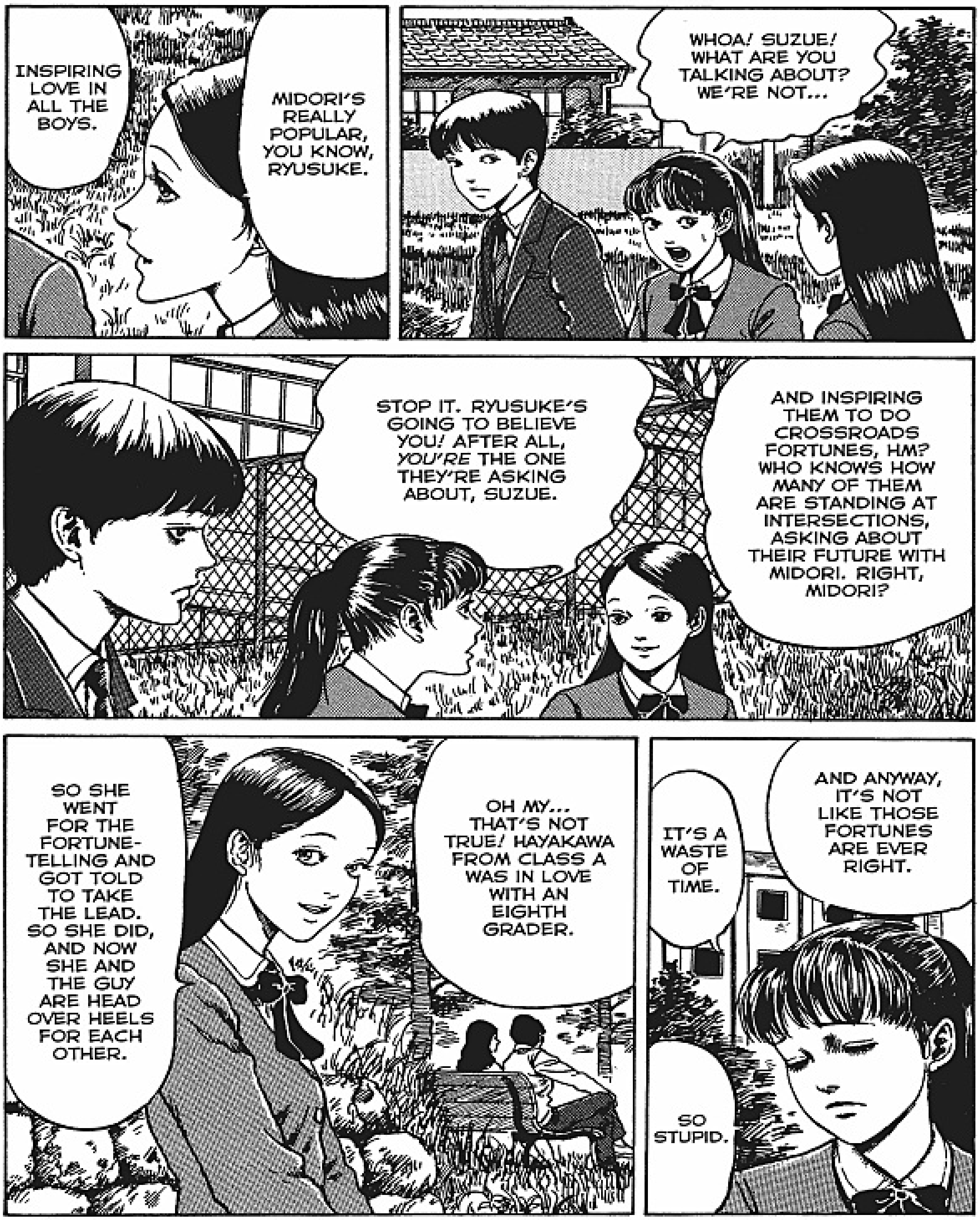

KATUNK
KATANK
KATUNK
KATUNK

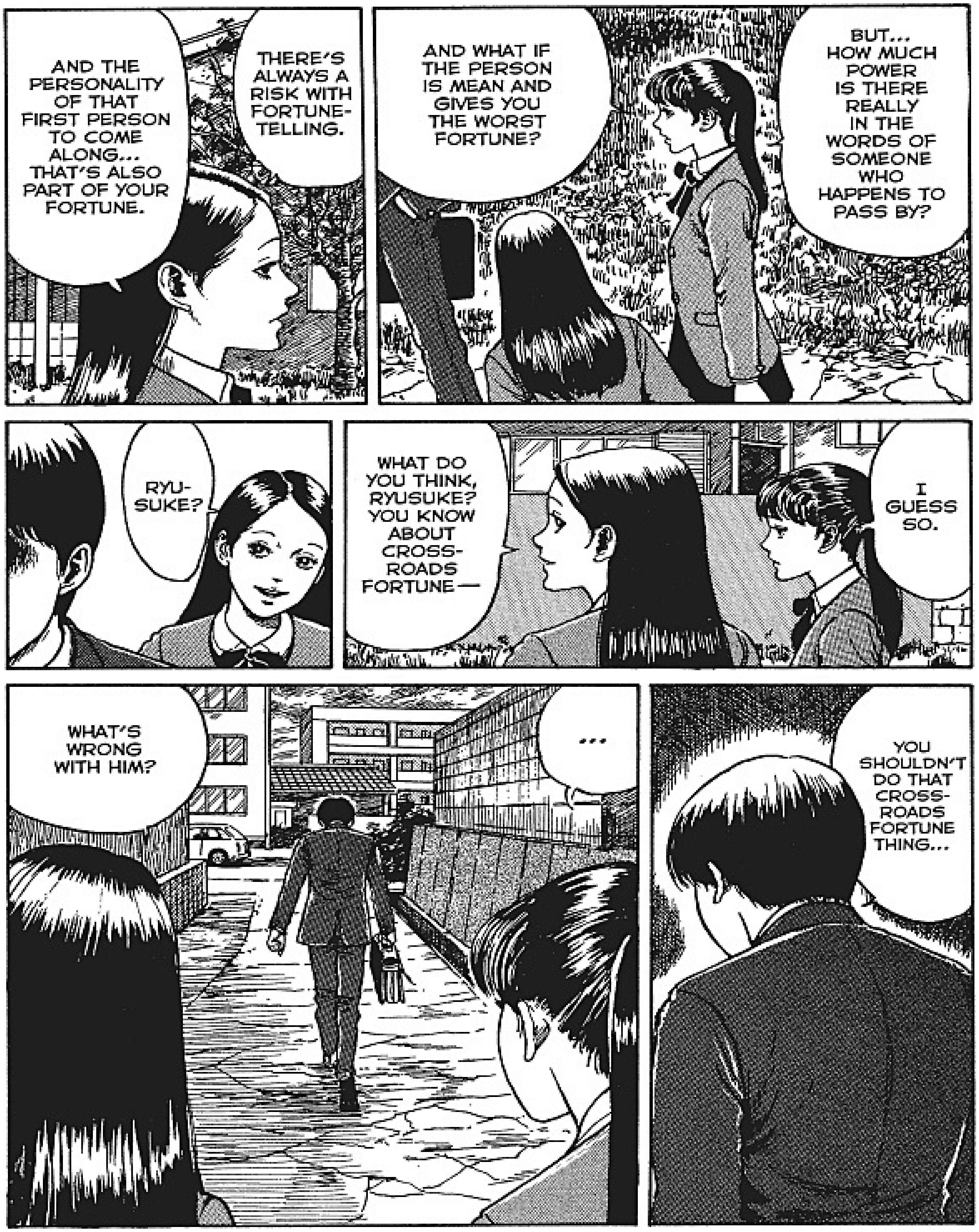

I HOPE THE MOVERS DON'T GET INTO AN ACCIDENT.
LOOKS LIKE THE FOGGY WEATHER IN THIS TOWN HASN'T CHANGED IN THE EIGHT YEARS WE'VE BEEN GONE.
ALMOST AT NAZUMI STATION. YOUR FATHER SHOULD BE THERE TO PICK US UP.
THE FOG'S GETTING THICKER.
WE USED TO LIVE HERE WHEN YOU WERE SMALL, YOU KNOW. YOU MIGHT END UP RUNNING INTO YOUR FRIENDS FROM KINDERGARTEN.
WHAT'S WRONG, RYUSUKE? YOU SEEM A LITTLE DOWN. DO YOU MISS OUR OLD HOME?
THIS FOGGY TOWN...
I ENDED UP IN THIS TOWN AGAIN BECAUSE OF DAD'S WORK.
YOU'RE RIGHT, MOM. AND I DON'T REALLY MISS THE OLD PLACE.

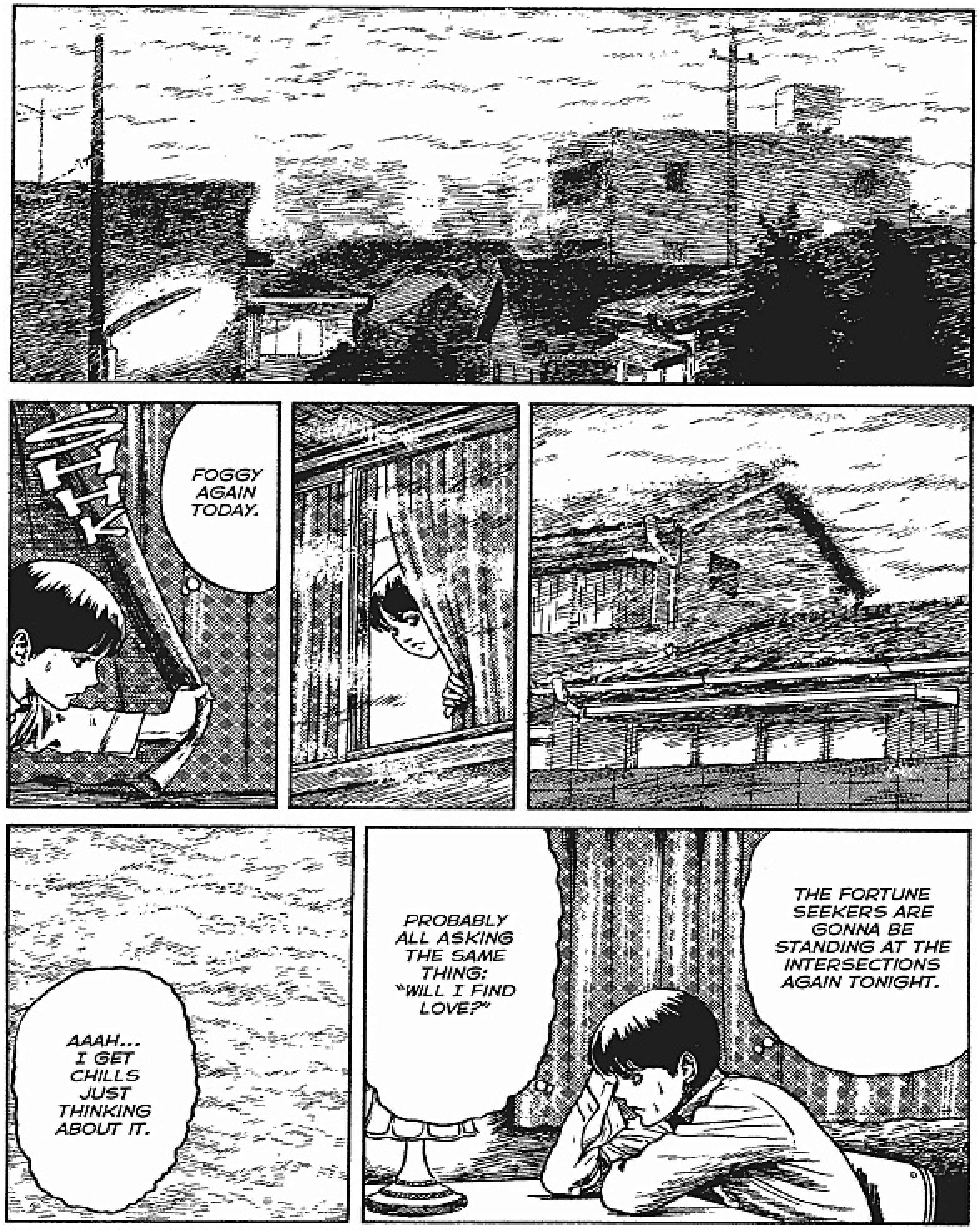

NAZUMI STATION
HEY! OVER HERE!
WERE YOU WAITING LONG, HONEY?
NO, I JUST GOT HERE.
AND WHAT ABOUT THE MOVERS?
THEY JUST FINISHED BRINGING EVERYTHING IN.
MAKE THE TOWN CLEAN
ON MY WAY HERE, I GOT ASKED TO DO A CROSSROADS FORTUNE.
CROSSROADS FORTUNE?
YOU KNOW, THAT FORTUNE-TELLING THING THEY'VE BEEN DOING AROUND HERE FOR AGES. YOU STAND AT AN INTERSECTION AND GET A GOOD OR BAD FORTUNE FROM THE FIRST PERSON WHO COMES ALONG.
IT'S A STRANGE, ANCIENT JAPANESE FOLKWAY. YOU DON'T SEE IT IN OTHER PLACES ANYMORE.
BUT IT'S BEEN REALLY POPULAR HERE LATELY WITH THE KIDS.
RYUSUKE? WHAT'S WRONG?
C'MON, HURRY UP.
...

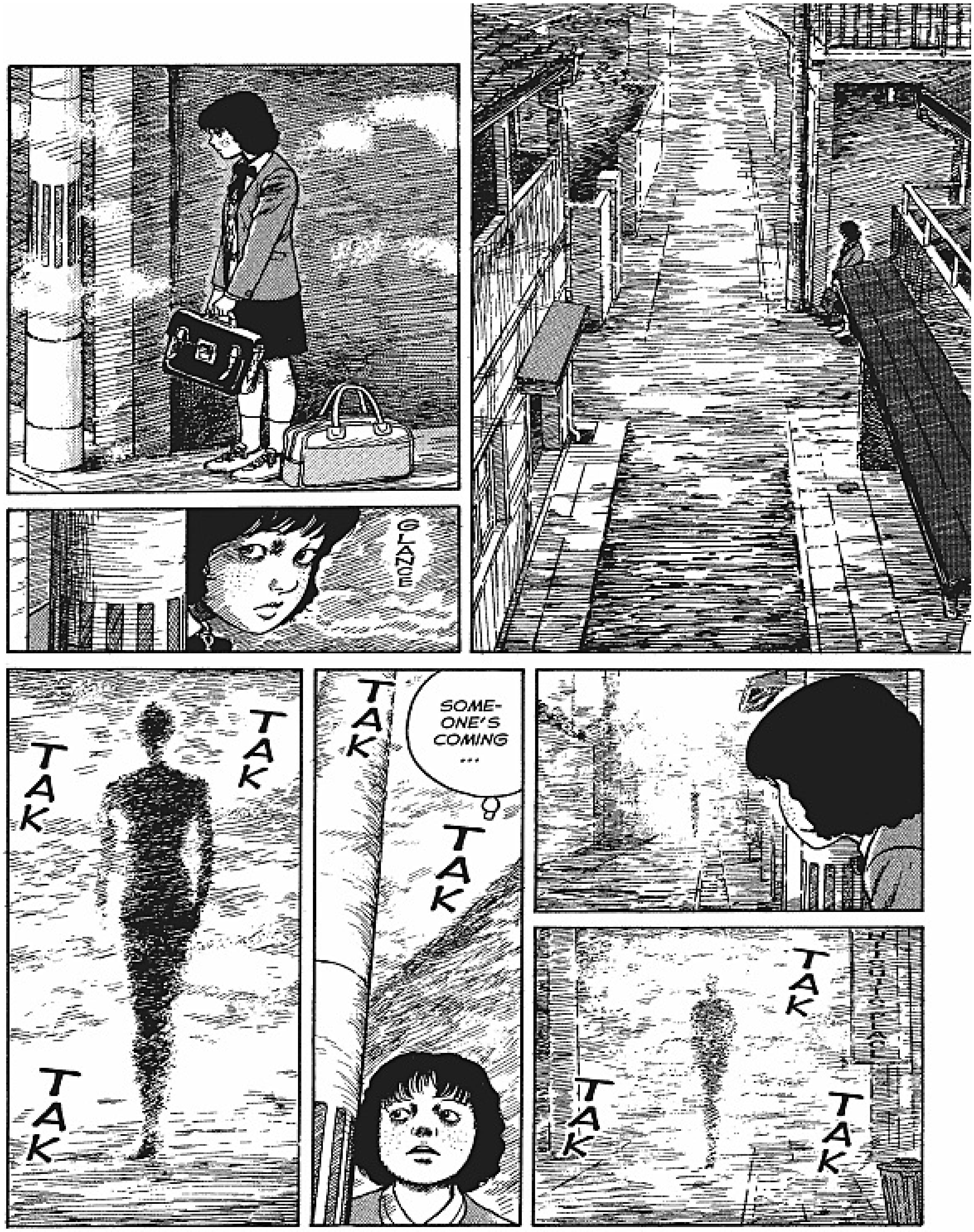

I WANT TO INTRODUCE A NEW CLASSMATE.
THIS IS RYUSUKE FUKADA.
HE ACTUALLY USED TO LIVE IN NAZUMI YEARS AGO, SO SOME OF YOU MIGHT ALREADY KNOW HIM.
BING BONG
BING BONG
CHATTER CHATTER
HEY? HE'S PRETTY COOL, *HUH?*
YEAH. LUCKY WE GOT HIM IN OUR CLASS.
REMEMBER ME? WE USED TO PLAY SWORDS ALL THE TIME IN KINDERGARTEN.
NOT REALLY... SORRY...
HEY! REMEMBER ME?
WE WENT TO THE SAME KINDERGARTEN.
I TOTALLY REMEMBER YOU, RYUSUKE.

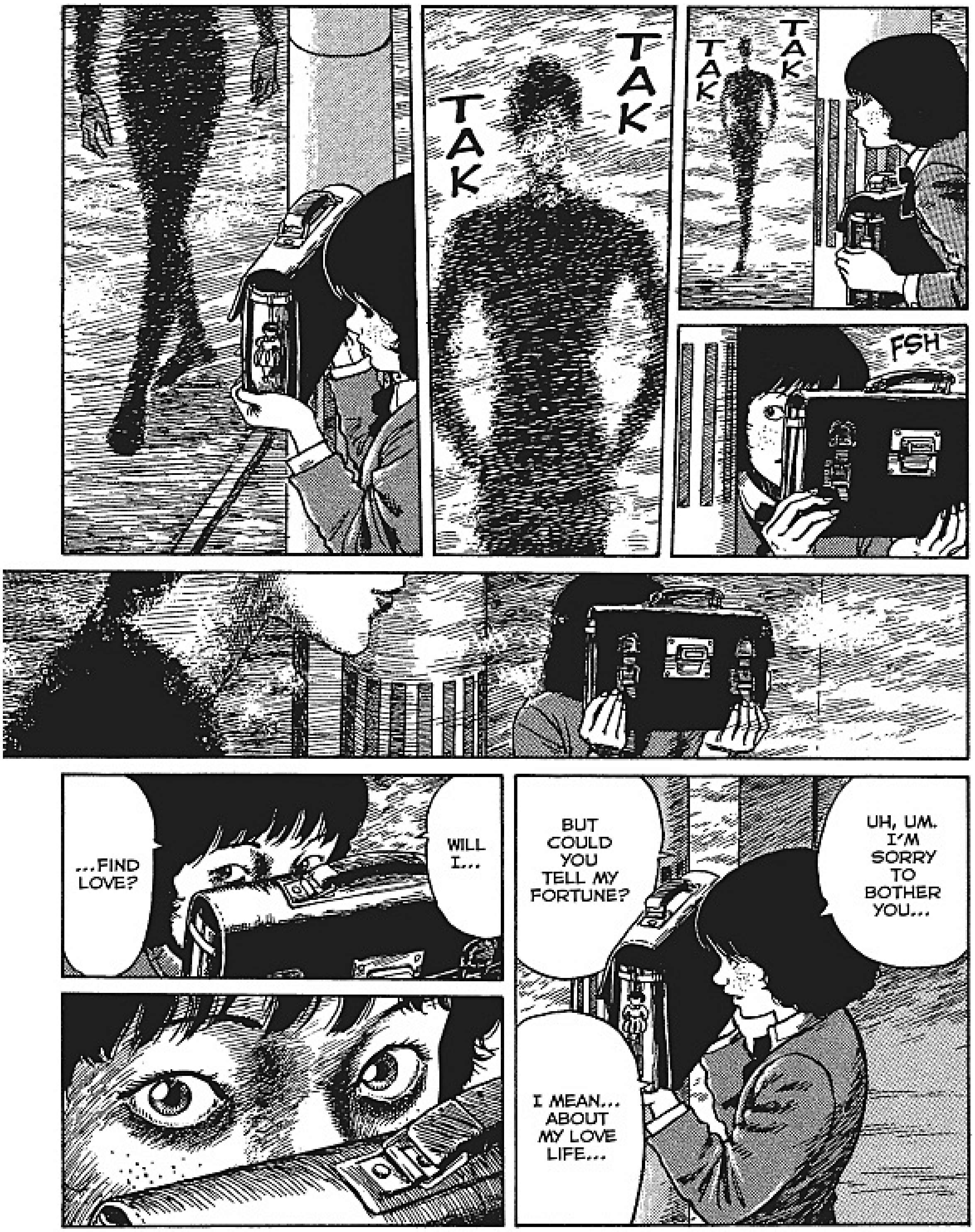

OH! MIDORI, IS THAT YOU?
YUP! SO YOU DO REMEMBER ME!
I RAN INTO OLD FRIENDS JUST LIKE MY MOTHER SAID, AND THE FOG OVER MY HEART SEEMED TO CLEAR BIT BY BIT.
MY REUNION WITH MIDORI SHIBAYAMA IN PARTICULAR MADE MIDDLE SCHOOL MUCH MORE FUN. SHE HAD BEEN MY SECRET FIRST LOVE.
NAZUMI MIDDLE
RYUSUKE, THIS IS MY BEST FRIEND, SUZUE TANAKA. SHE'S IN CLASS B.
SHE WENT TO A DIFFERENT KINDERGARTEN, SO YOU WOULDN'T HAVE MET HER THEN.
NICE TO MEET YOU.
SAME HERE.
YOU'RE ALL THE GIRLS IN MY CLASS CAN TALK ABOUT, RYUSUKE.
THEY'RE ALL, "THIS HOT GUY TRANSFERRED TO OUR SCHOOL." BUT THEY'VE GIVEN UP ON WINNING YOU OVER SINCE YOU HAVE MIDORI.

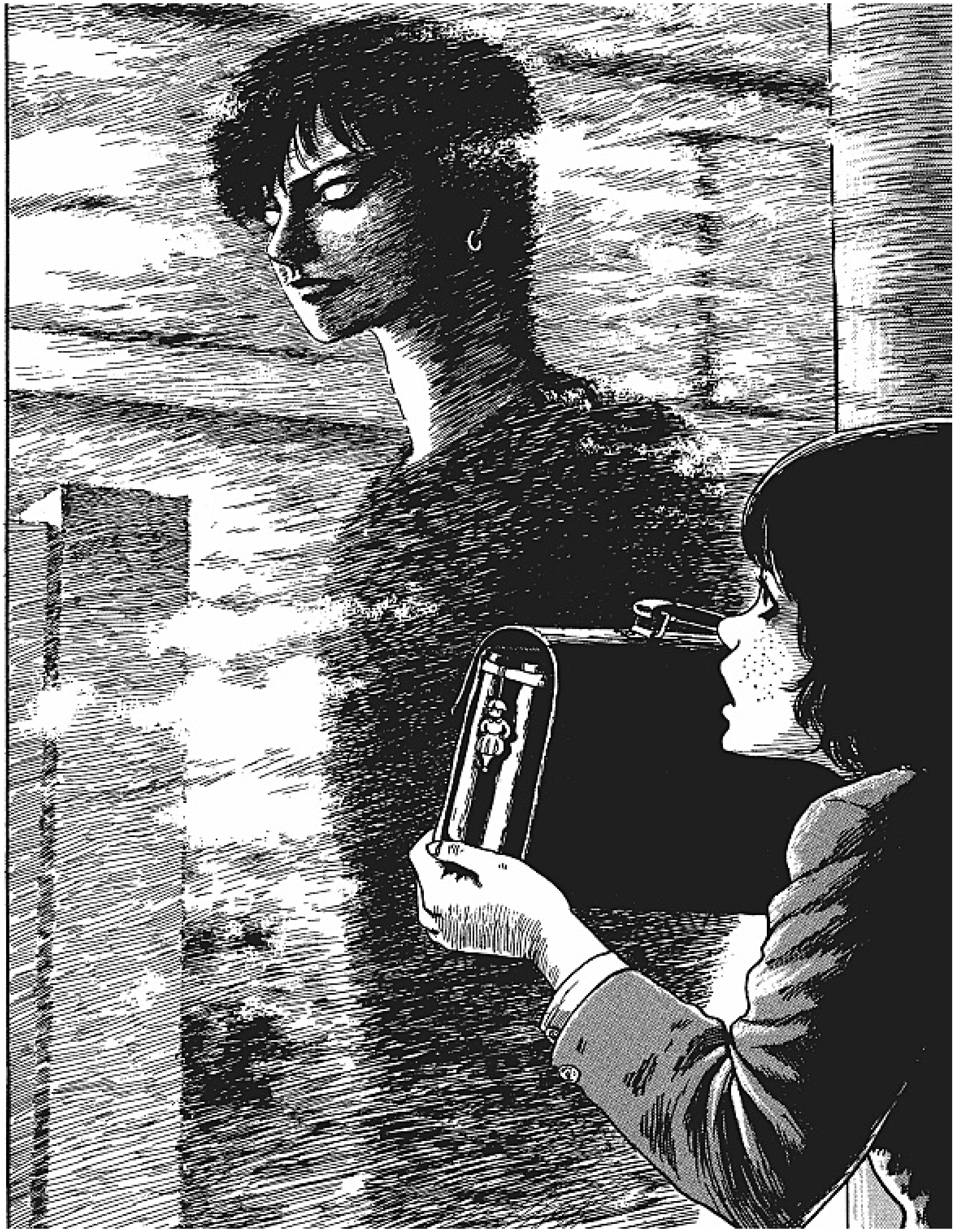

WHOA! SUZUE! WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? WE'RE NOT...
MIDORI'S REALLY POPULAR, YOU KNOW, RYUSUKE.
INSPIRING LOVE IN ALL THE BOYS.
AND INSPIRING THEM TO DO CROSSROADS FORTUNES, HM? WHO KNOWS HOW MANY OF THEM ARE STANDING AT INTERSECTIONS, ASKING ABOUT THEIR FUTURE WITH MIDORI. RIGHT, MIDORI?
STOP IT. RYUSUKE'S GOING TO BELIEVE YOU! AFTER ALL, *YOU'RE* THE ONE THEY'RE ASKING ABOUT, SUZUE.
AND ANYWAY, IT'S NOT LIKE THOSE FORTUNES ARE EVER RIGHT.
IT'S A WASTE OF TIME.
SO STUPID.
OH MY... THAT'S NOT TRUE! HAYAKAWA FROM CLASS A WAS IN LOVE WITH AN EIGHTH GRADER.
SO SHE WENT FOR THE FORTUNE-TELLING AND GOT TOLD TO TAKE THE LEAD. SO SHE DID, AND NOW SHE AND THE GUY ARE HEAD OVER HEELS FOR EACH OTHER.

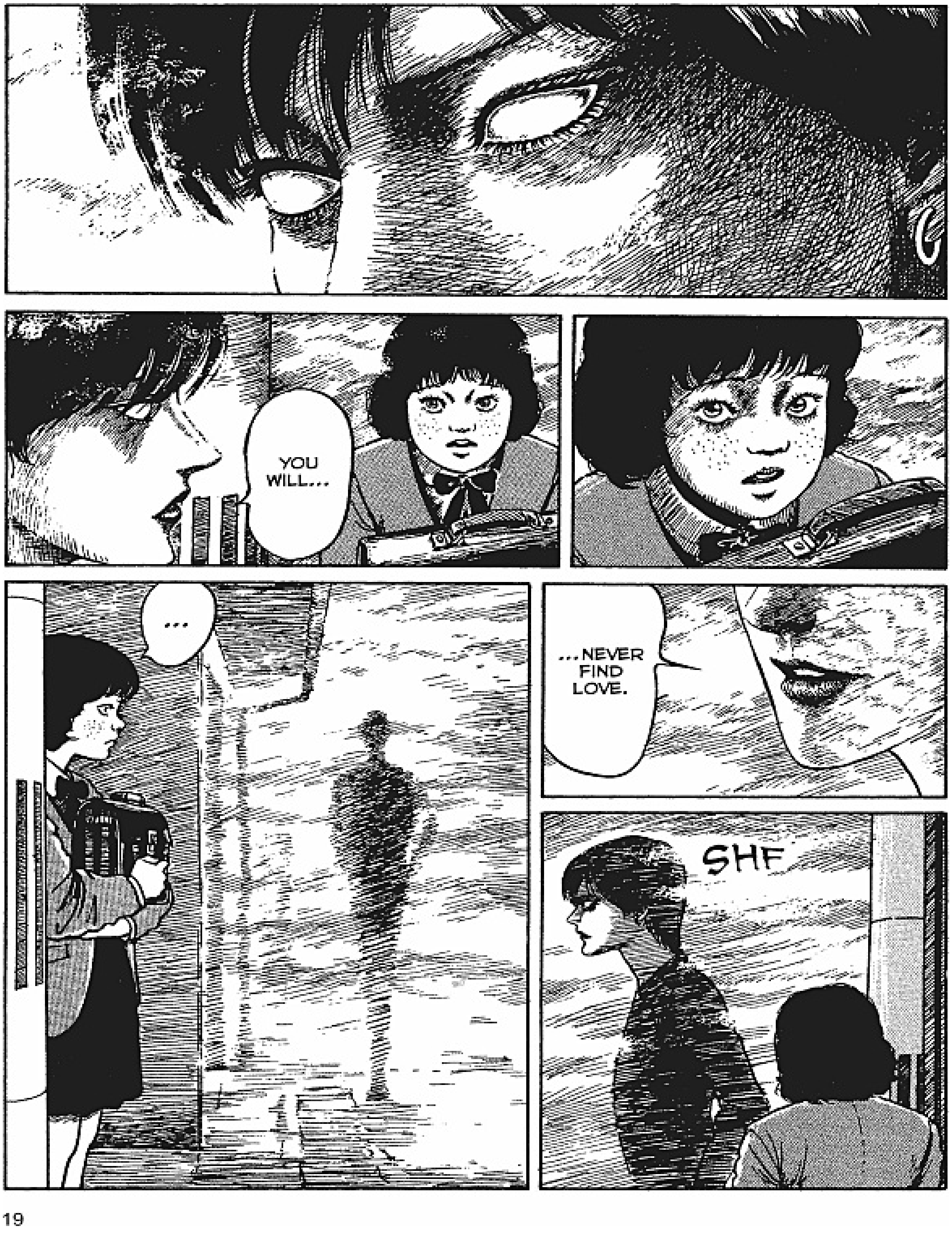

BUT... HOW MUCH POWER IS THERE REALLY IN THE WORDS OF SOMEONE WHO HAPPENS TO PASS BY?
AND WHAT IF THE PERSON IS MEAN AND GIVES YOU THE WORST FORTUNE?
THERE'S ALWAYS A RISK WITH FORTUNE-TELLING.
AND THE PERSONALITY OF THAT FIRST PERSON TO COME ALONG... THAT'S ALSO PART OF YOUR FORTUNE.
I GUESS SO.
WHAT DO YOU THINK, RYUSUKE? YOU KNOW ABOUT CROSSROADS FORTUNE—
RYUSUKE?
YOU SHOULDN'T DO THAT CROSSROADS FORTUNE THING...
...
WHAT'S WRONG WITH HIM?

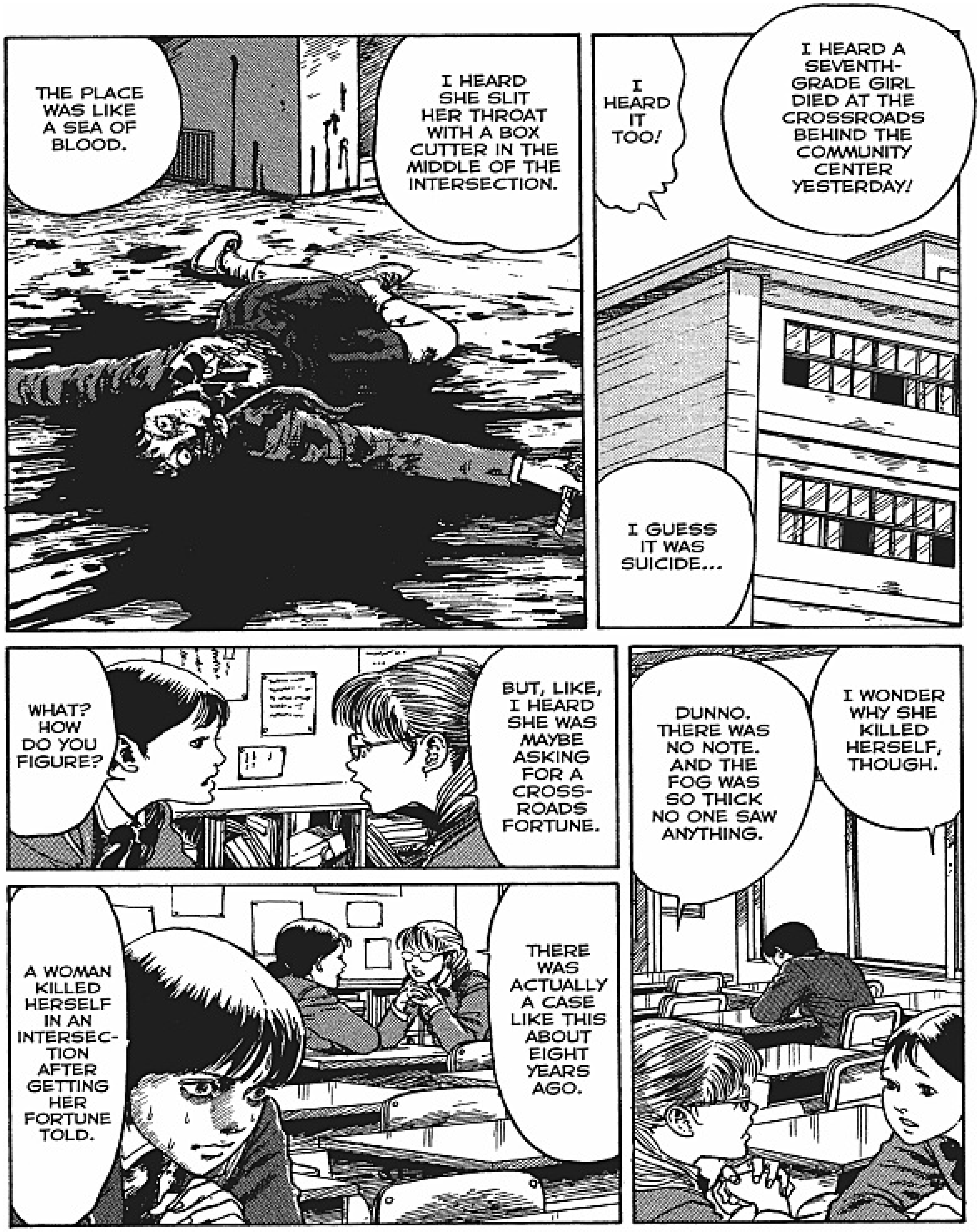

SHHK
FOGGY AGAIN TODAY.
THE FORTUNE SEEKERS ARE GONNA BE STANDING AT THE INTERSECTIONS AGAIN TONIGHT.
PROBABLY ALL ASKING THE SAME THING: "WILL I FIND LOVE?"
AAAH... I GET CHILLS JUST THINKING ABOUT IT.

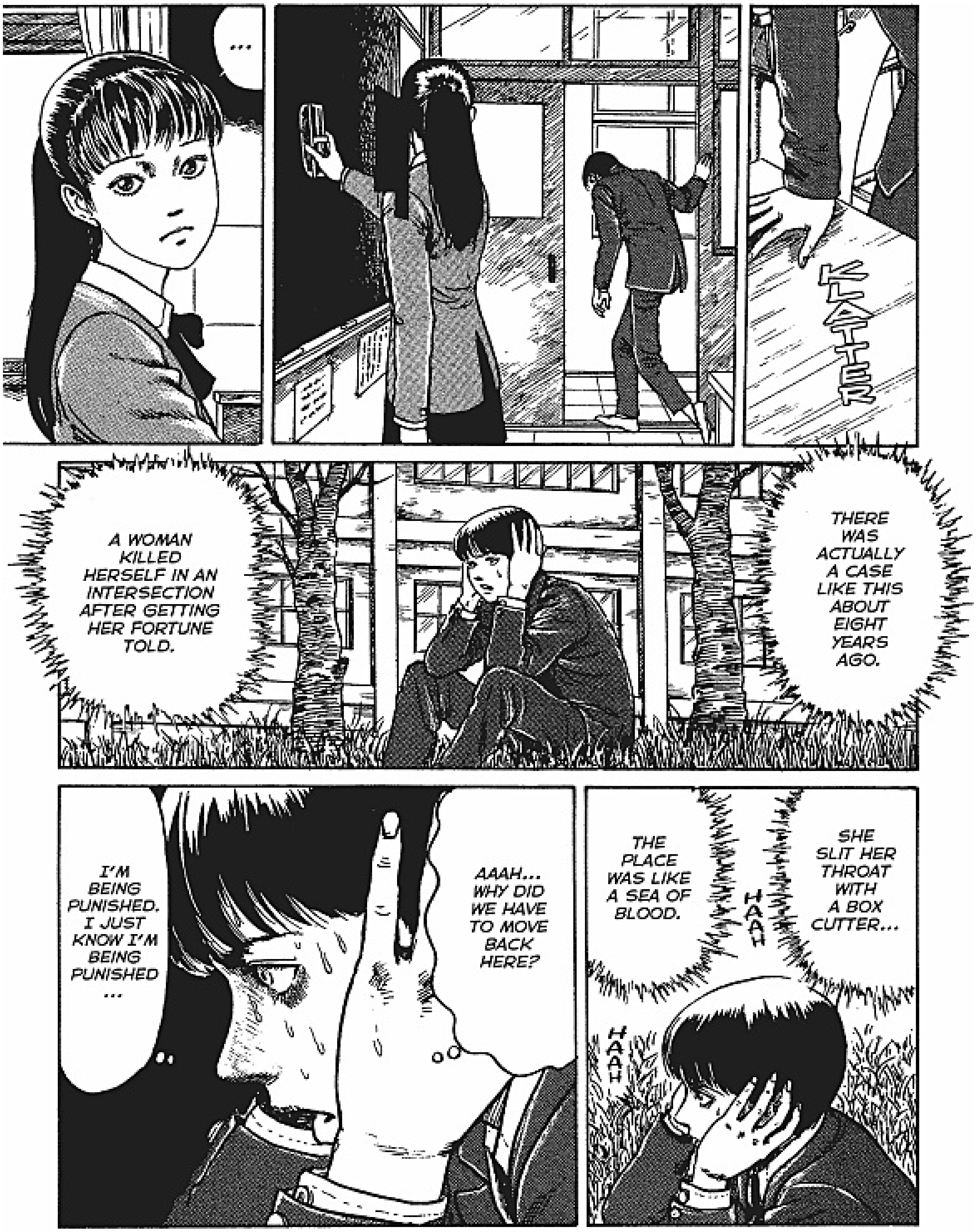

GLANCE
TAK
TAK
TAK
TAK
SOME-ONE'S COMING ...
TAK
TAK
TAK
TAK
TAK
TAK

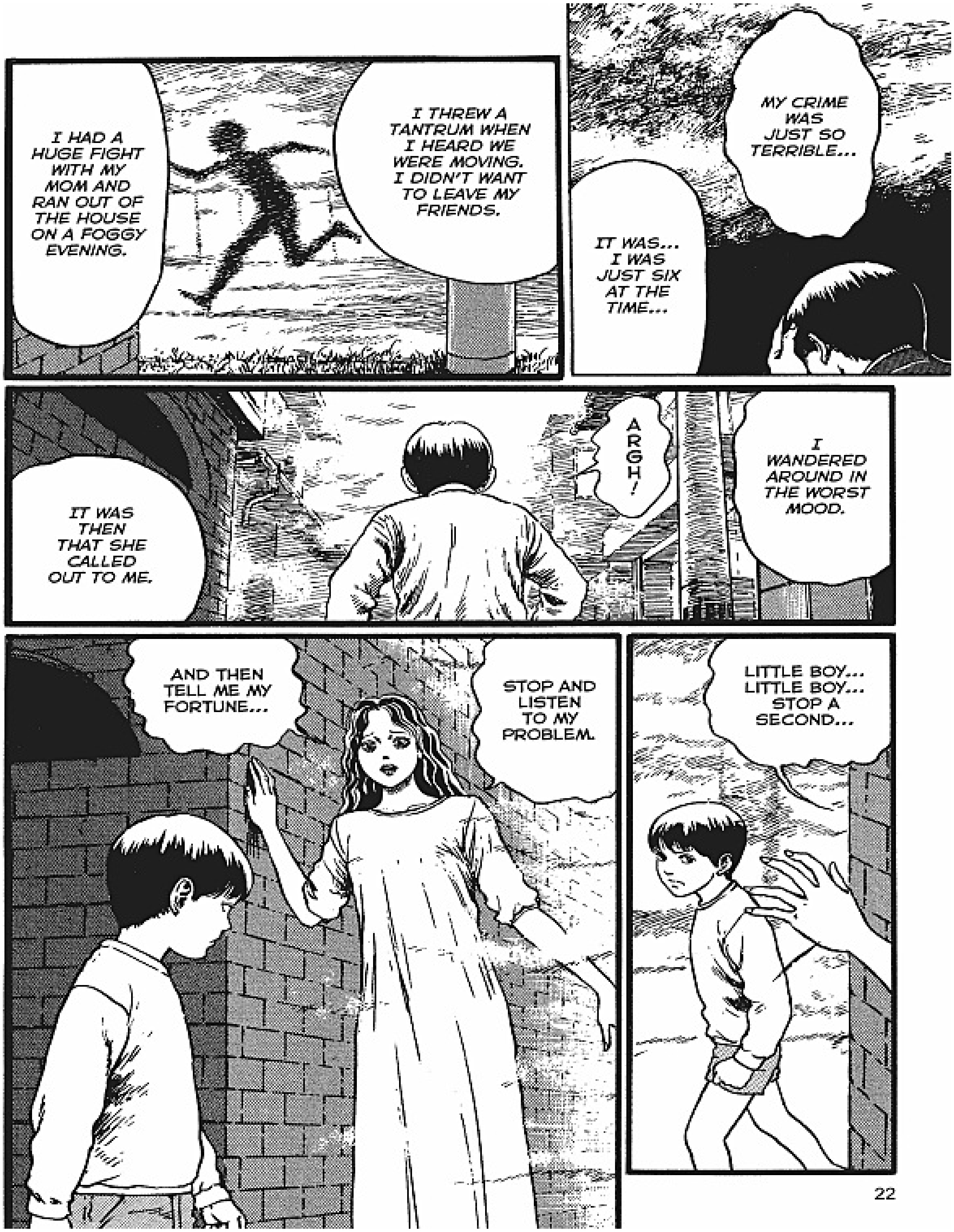

TAK
TAK
TAK
TAK
FSH
UH, UM. I'M SORRY TO BOTHER YOU...
BUT COULD YOU TELL MY FORTUNE?
I MEAN... ABOUT MY LOVE LIFE...
WILL I...
...FIND LOVE?

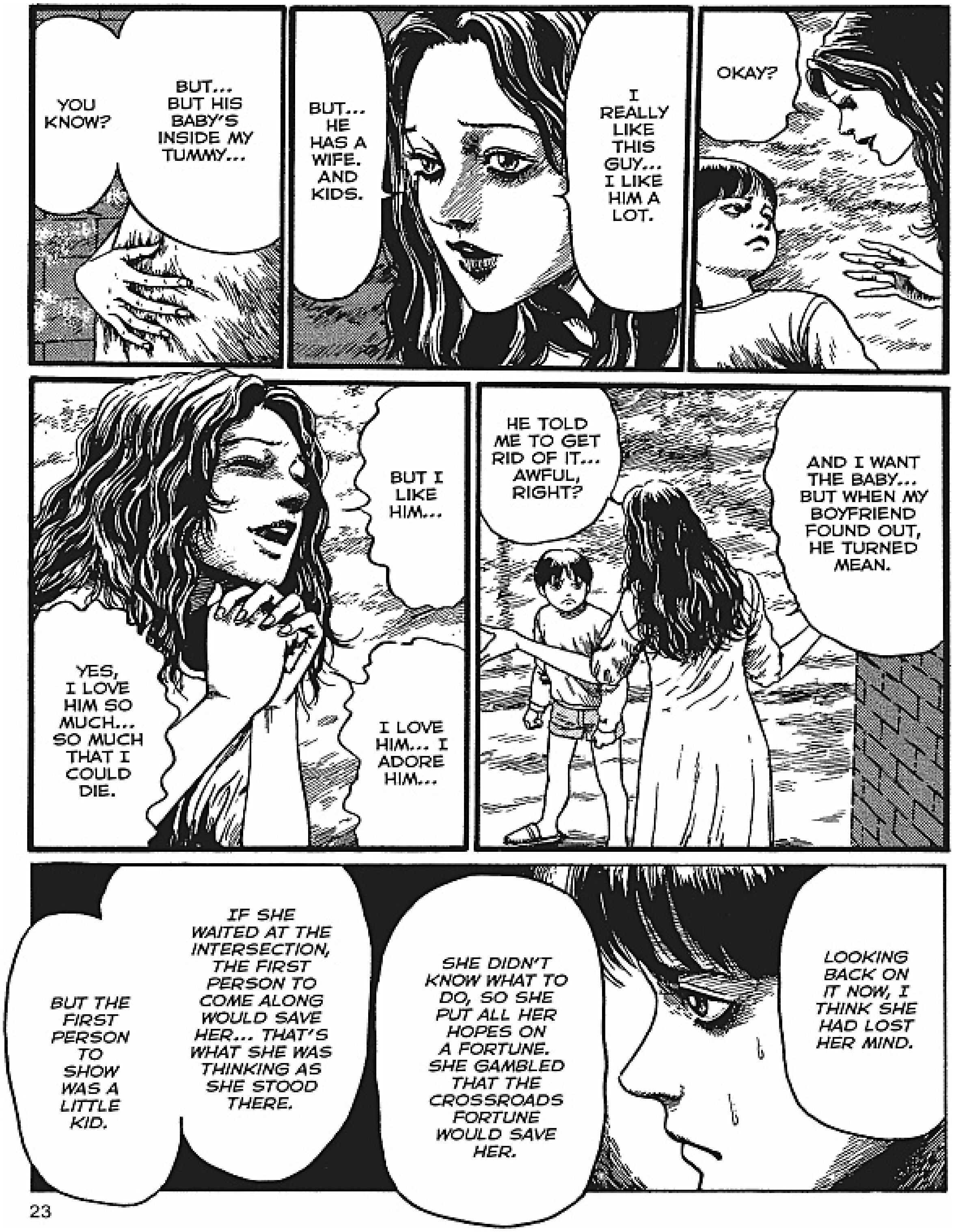


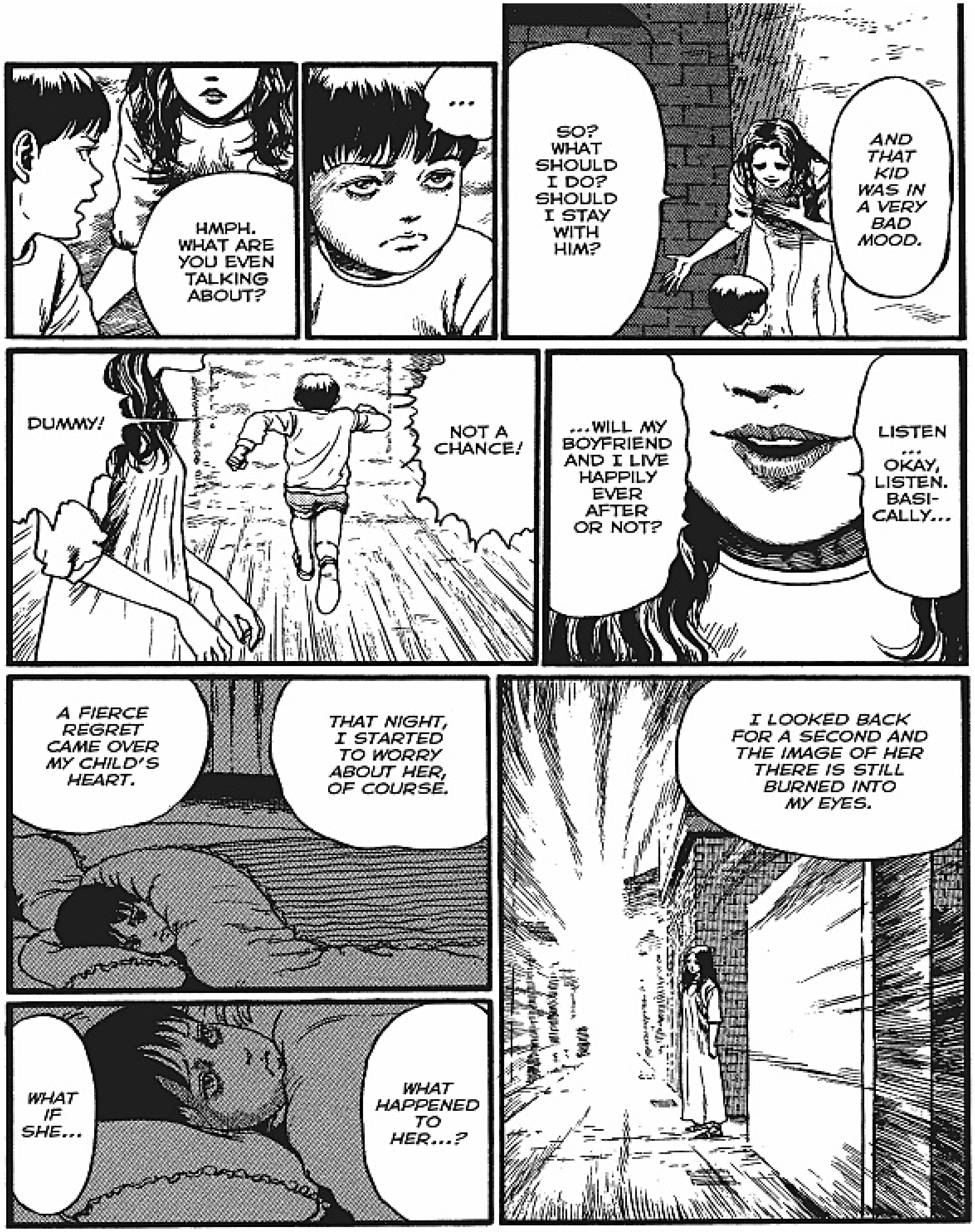

YOU WILL...
...
...NEVER FIND LOVE.
SHF

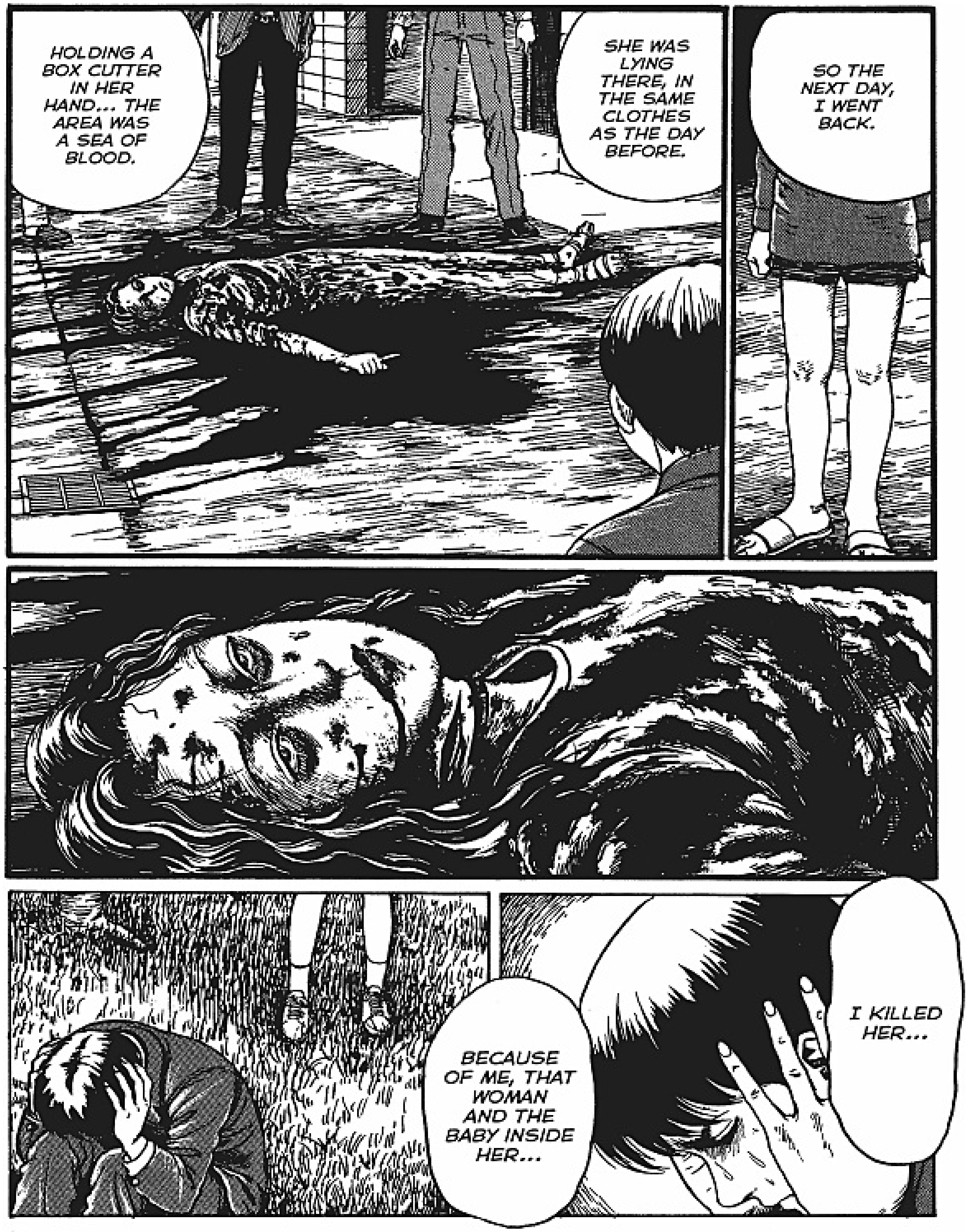

I HEARD A SEVENTH-GRADE GIRL DIED AT THE CROSSROADS BEHIND THE COMMUNITY CENTER YESTERDAY!
I HEARD IT TOO!
I GUESS IT WAS SUICIDE...
I HEARD SHE SLIT HER THROAT WITH A BOX CUTTER IN THE MIDDLE OF THE INTERSECTION.
THE PLACE WAS LIKE A SEA OF BLOOD.
I WONDER WHY SHE KILLED HERSELF, THOUGH.
DUNNO. THERE WAS NO NOTE. AND THE FOG WAS SO THICK NO ONE SAW ANYTHING.
BUT, LIKE, I HEARD SHE WAS MAYBE ASKING FOR A CROSSROADS FORTUNE.
WHAT? HOW DO YOU FIGURE?
THERE WAS ACTUALLY A CASE LIKE THIS ABOUT EIGHT YEARS AGO.
A WOMAN KILLED HERSELF IN AN INTERSECTION AFTER GETTING HER FORTUNE TOLD.

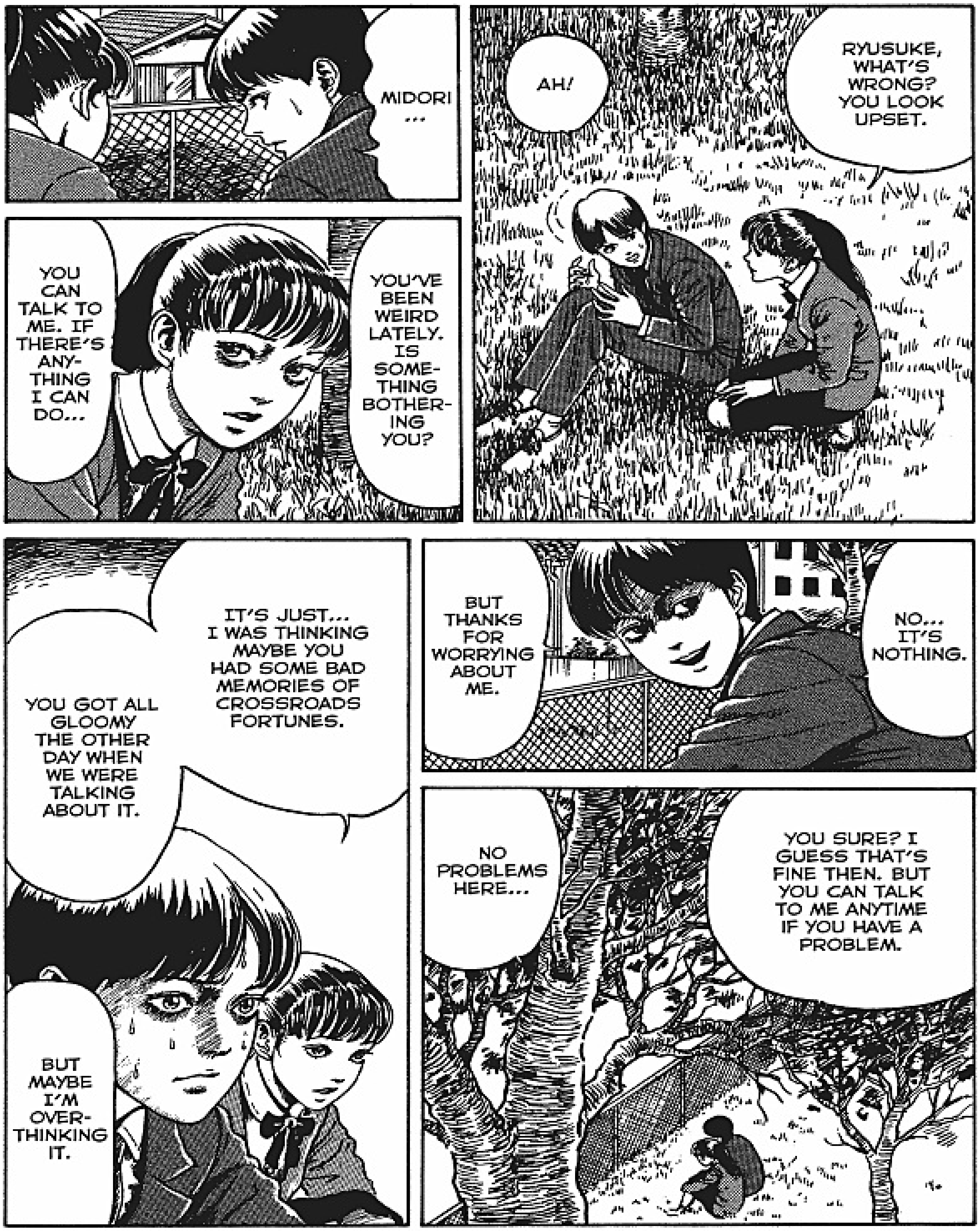

KLATTER
...
THERE WAS ACTUALLY A CASE LIKE THIS ABOUT EIGHT YEARS AGO.
A WOMAN KILLED HERSELF IN AN INTERSECTION AFTER GETTING HER FORTUNE TOLD.
SHE SLIT HER THROAT WITH A BOX CUTTER...
HAAH
THE PLACE WAS LIKE A SEA OF BLOOD.
HAAH
AAAH... WHY DID WE HAVE TO MOVE BACK HERE?
I'M BEING PUNISHED. I JUST KNOW I'M BEING PUNISHED...

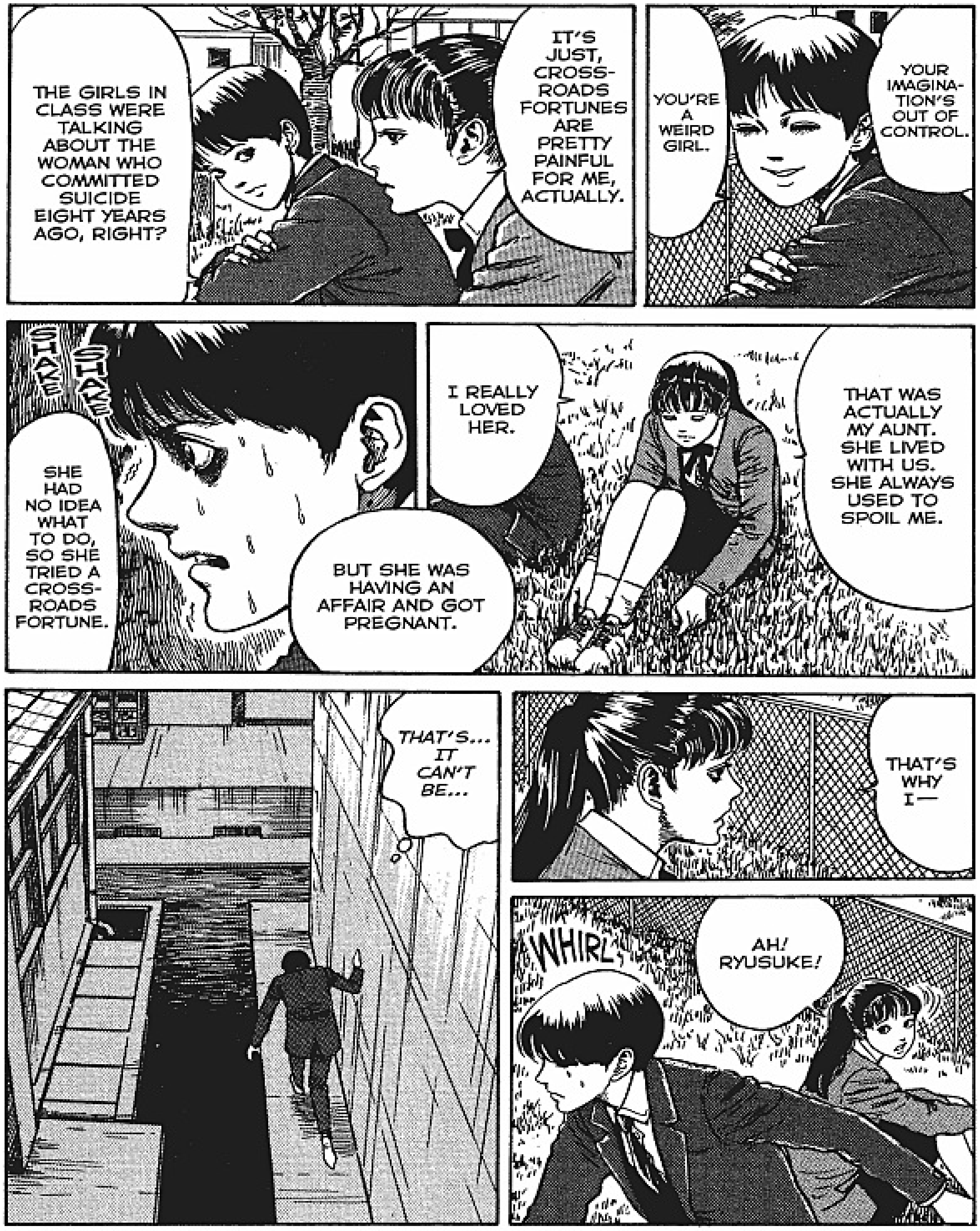

MY CRIME WAS JUST SO TERRIBLE...
IT WAS... I WAS JUST SIX AT THE TIME...
I THREW A TANTRUM WHEN I HEARD WE WERE MOVING. I DIDN'T WANT TO LEAVE MY FRIENDS.
I HAD A HUGE FIGHT WITH MY MOM AND RAN OUT OF THE HOUSE ON A FOGGY EVENING.
I WANDERED AROUND IN THE WORST MOOD.
ARGH!
IT WAS THEN THAT SHE CALLED OUT TO ME.
LITTLE BOY... LITTLE BOY... STOP A SECOND...
STOP AND LISTEN TO MY PROBLEM.
AND THEN TELL ME MY FORTUNE...

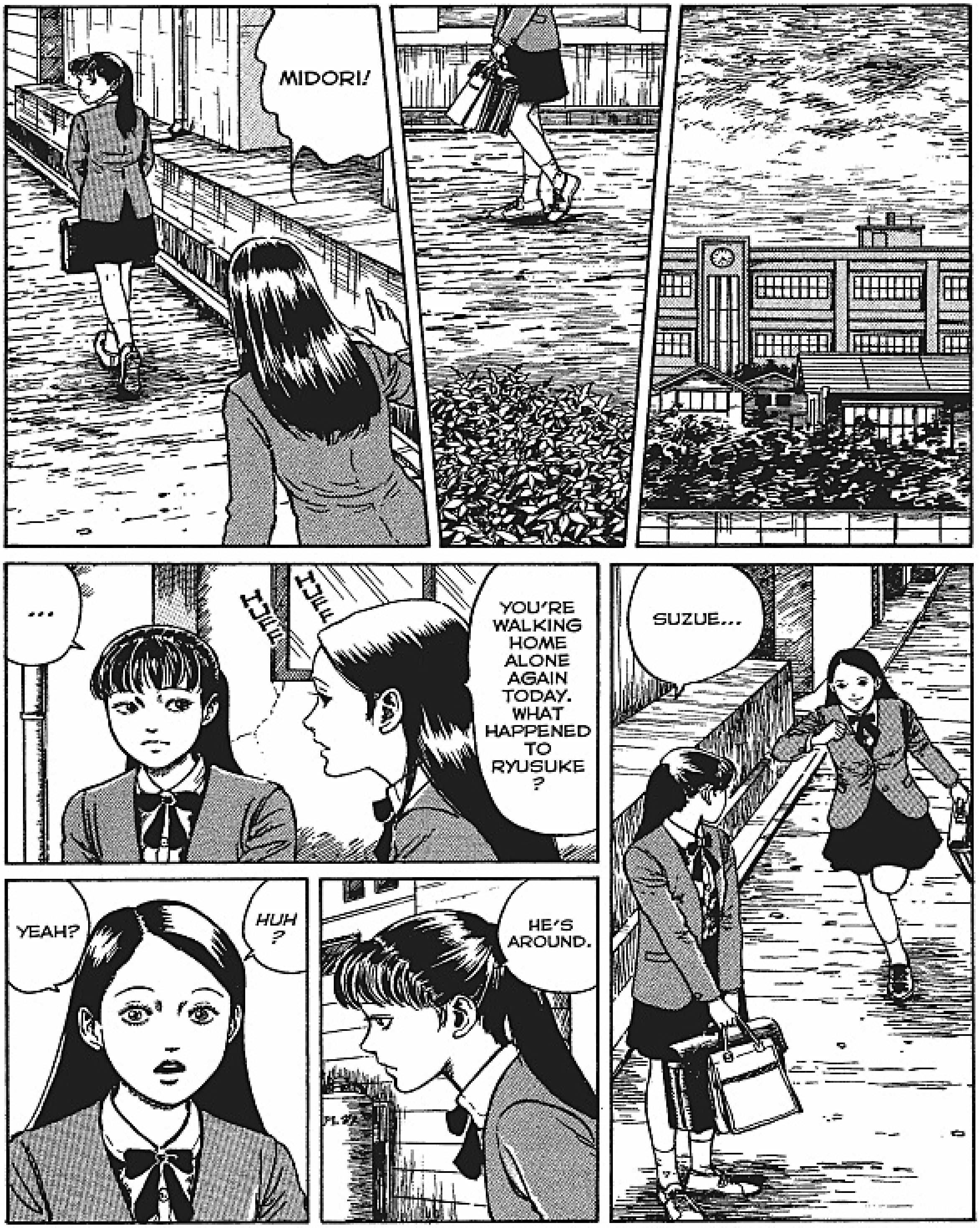

OKAY?
I REALLY LIKE THIS GUY... I LIKE HIM A LOT.
BUT... HE HAS A WIFE. AND KIDS.
BUT... BUT HIS BABY'S INSIDE MY TUMMY...
YOU KNOW?
AND I WANT THE BABY... BUT WHEN MY BOYFRIEND FOUND OUT, HE TURNED MEAN.
HE TOLD ME TO GET RID OF IT... AWFUL, RIGHT?
BUT I LIKE HIM...
I LOVE HIM... I ADORE HIM...
YES, I LOVE HIM SO MUCH... SO MUCH THAT I COULD DIE.
LOOKING BACK ON IT NOW, I THINK SHE HAD LOST HER MIND.
SHE DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO DO, SO SHE PUT ALL HER HOPES ON A FORTUNE. SHE GAMBLED THAT THE CROSSROADS FORTUNE WOULD SAVE HER.
IF SHE WAITED AT THE INTERSECTION, THE FIRST PERSON TO COME ALONG WOULD SAVE HER... THAT'S WHAT SHE WAS THINKING AS SHE STOOD THERE.
BUT THE FIRST PERSON TO SHOW WAS A LITTLE KID.

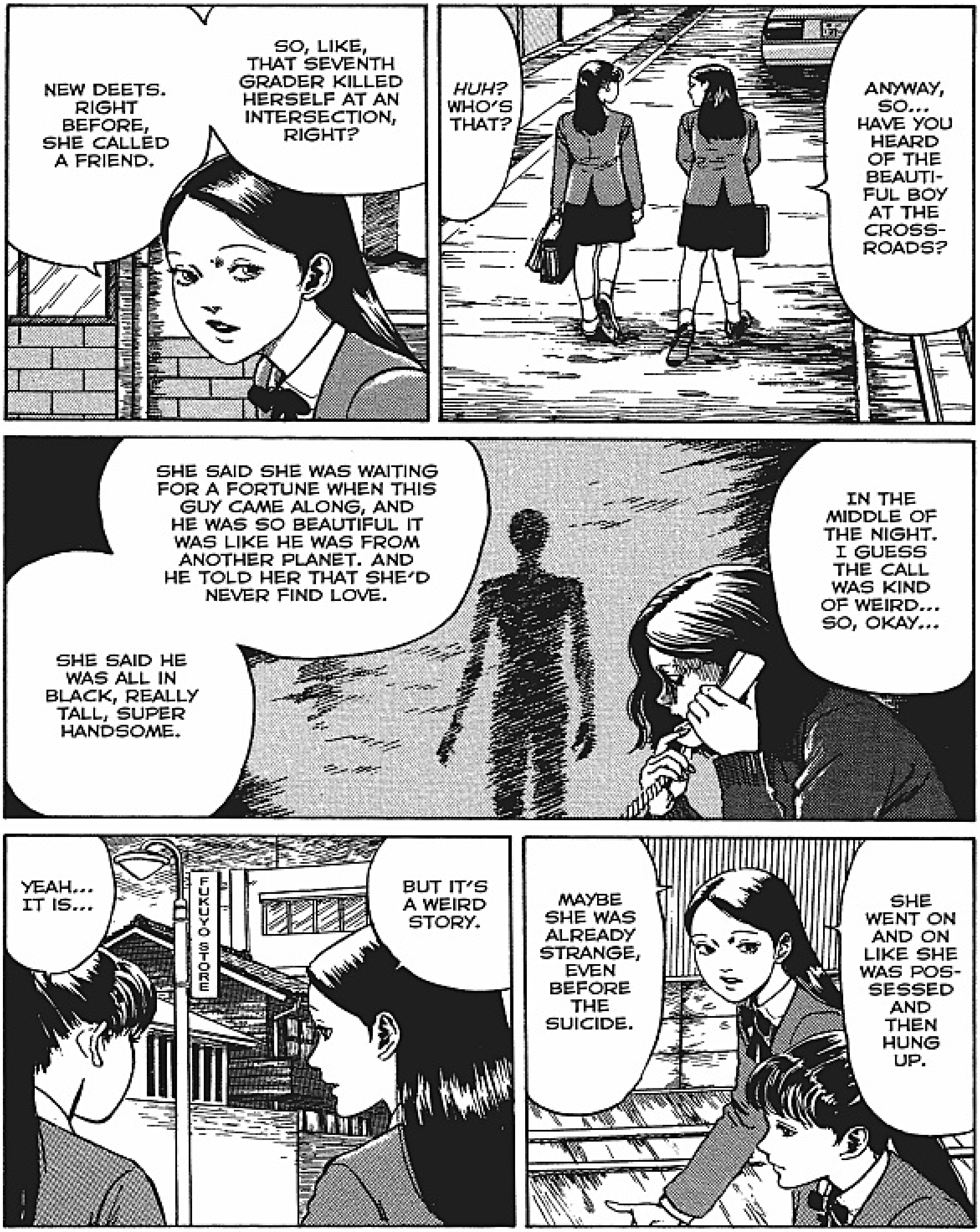

AND THAT KID WAS IN A VERY BAD MOOD.
SO? WHAT SHOULD I DO? SHOULD I STAY WITH HIM?
...
HMPH. WHAT ARE YOU EVEN TALKING ABOUT?
LISTEN ... OKAY, LISTEN. BASICALLY...
...WILL MY BOYFRIEND AND I LIVE HAPPILY EVER AFTER OR NOT?
NOT A CHANCE!
DUMMY!
I LOOKED BACK FOR A SECOND AND THE IMAGE OF HER THERE IS STILL BURNED INTO MY EYES.
THAT NIGHT, I STARTED TO WORRY ABOUT HER, OF COURSE.
A FIERCE REGRET CAME OVER MY CHILD'S HEART.
WHAT HAPPENED TO HER...?
WHAT IF SHE...

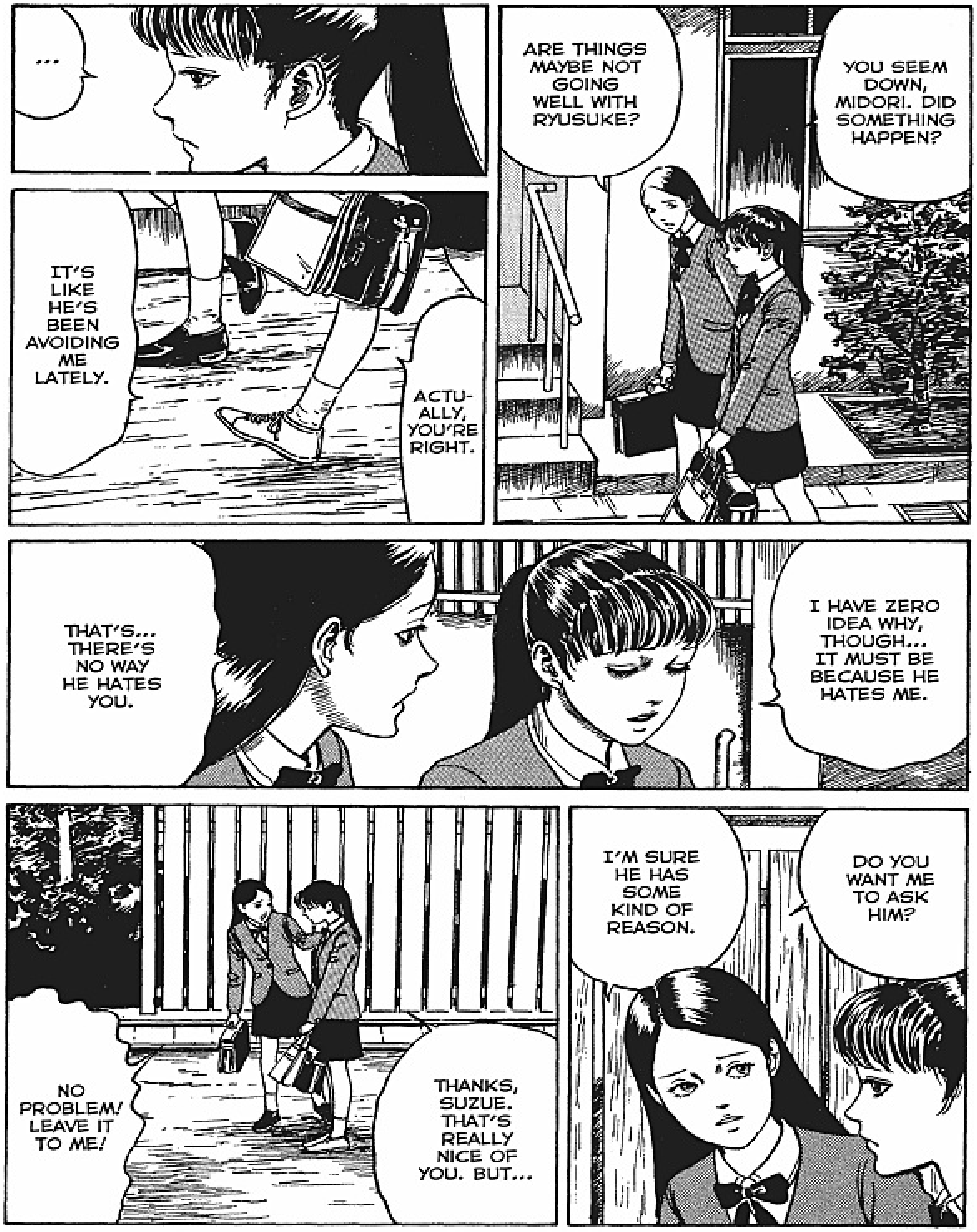

SO THE NEXT DAY, I WENT BACK.
SHE WAS LYING THERE, IN THE SAME CLOTHES AS THE DAY BEFORE.
HOLDING A BOX CUTTER IN HER HAND... THE AREA WAS A SEA OF BLOOD.
I KILLED HER...
BECAUSE OF ME, THAT WOMAN AND THE BABY INSIDE HER...

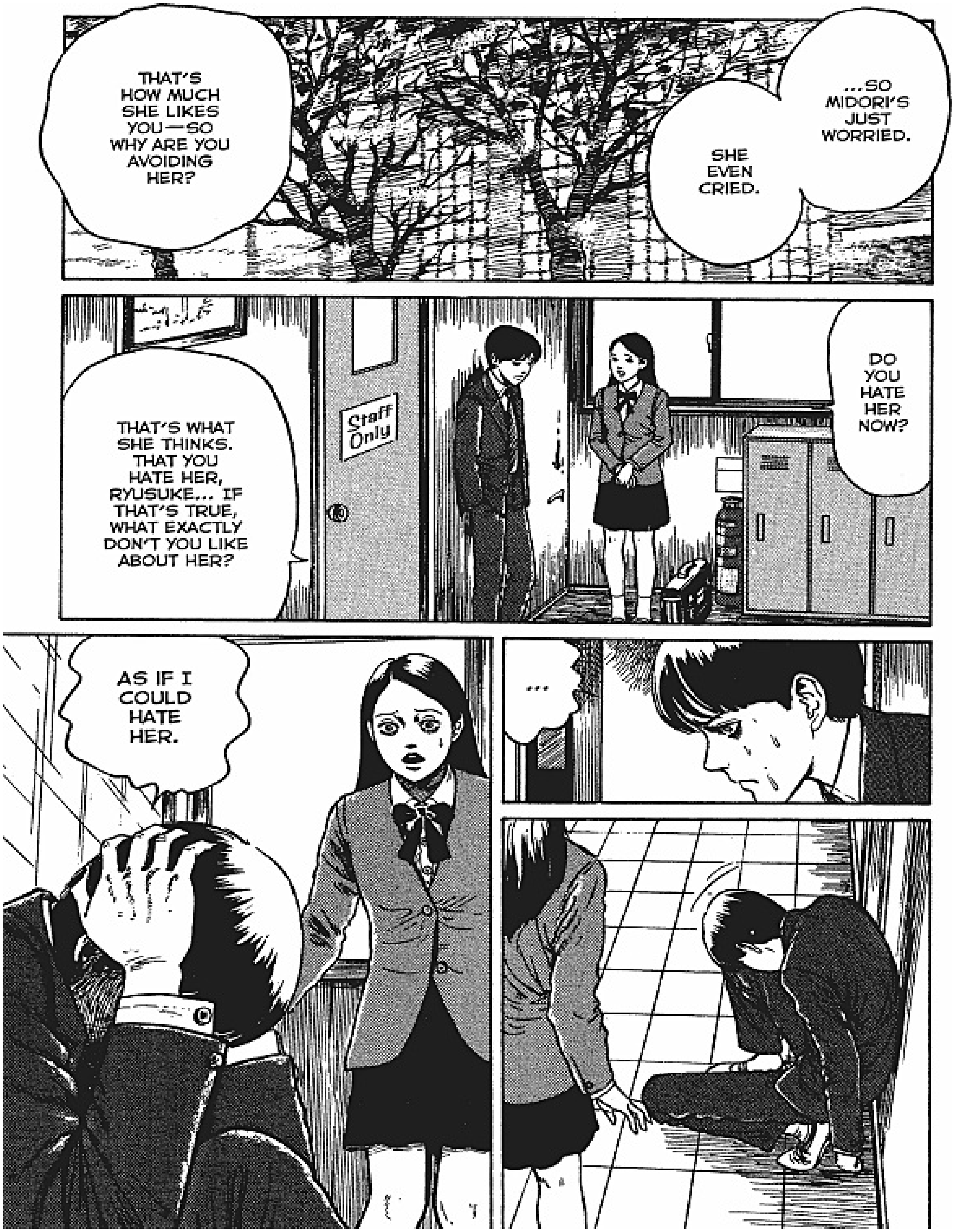

RYUSUKE, WHAT'S WRONG? YOU LOOK UPSET.
AH!
MIDORI ...
YOU'VE BEEN WEIRD LATELY. IS SOMETHING BOTHERING YOU?
YOU CAN TALK TO ME. IF THERE'S ANYTHING I CAN DO...
NO... IT'S NOTHING.
BUT THANKS FOR WORRYING ABOUT ME.
YOU SURE? I GUESS THAT'S FINE THEN. BUT YOU CAN TALK TO ME ANYTIME IF YOU HAVE A PROBLEM.
NO PROBLEMS HERE...
IT'S JUST... I WAS THINKING MAYBE YOU HAD SOME BAD MEMORIES OF CROSSROADS FORTUNES.
YOU GOT ALL GLOOMY THE OTHER DAY WHEN WE WERE TALKING ABOUT IT.
BUT MAYBE I'M OVERTHINKING IT.

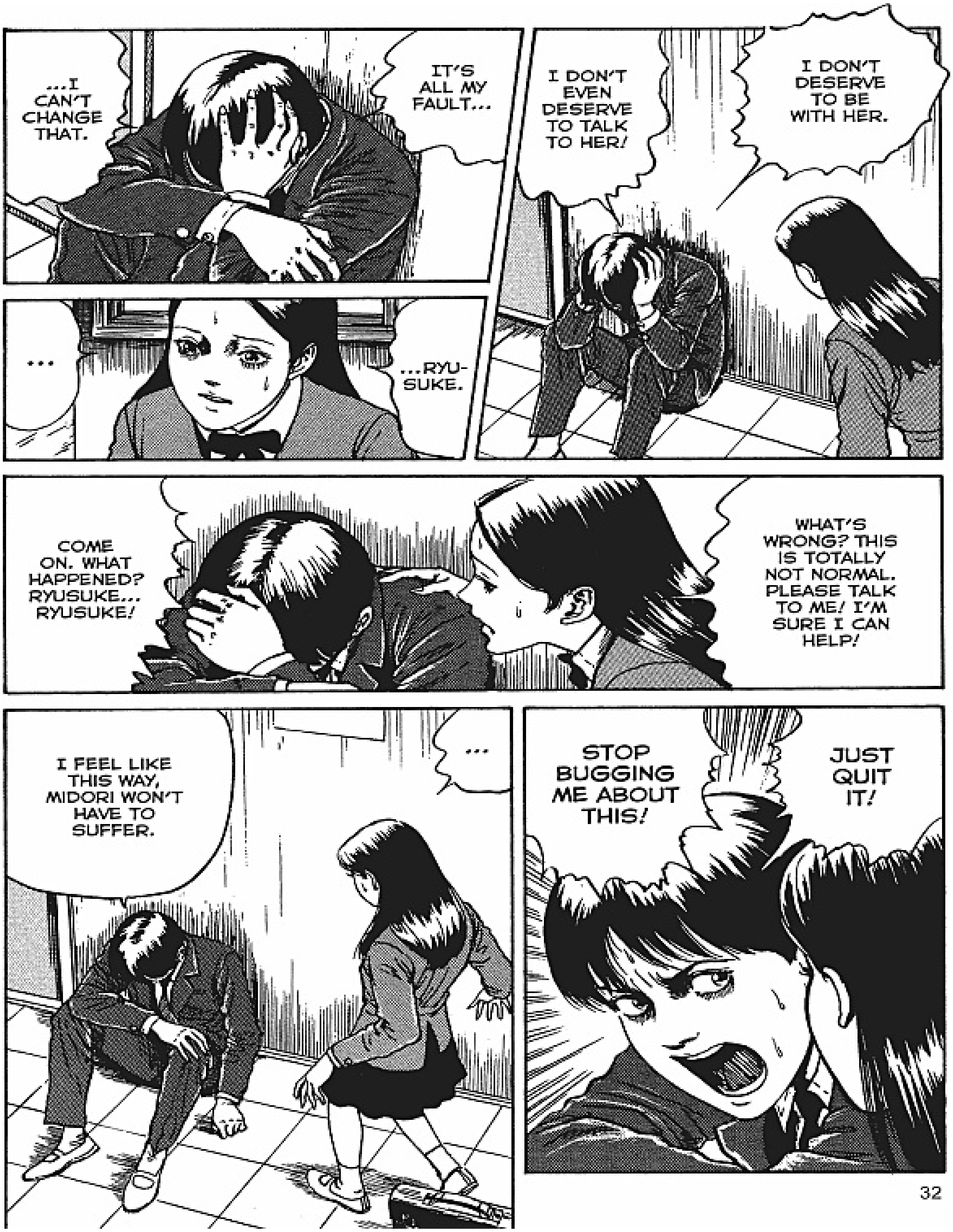

YOUR IMAGINATION'S OUT OF CONTROL.
YOU'RE A WEIRD GIRL.
IT'S JUST, CROSSROADS FORTUNES ARE PRETTY PAINFUL FOR ME, ACTUALLY.
THE GIRLS IN CLASS WERE TALKING ABOUT THE WOMAN WHO COMMITTED SUICIDE EIGHT YEARS AGO, RIGHT?
THAT WAS ACTUALLY MY AUNT. SHE LIVED WITH US. SHE ALWAYS USED TO SPOIL ME.
I REALLY LOVED HER.
BUT SHE WAS HAVING AN AFFAIR AND GOT PREGNANT.
SHE HAD NO IDEA WHAT TO DO, SO SHE TRIED A CROSSROADS FORTUNE.
SHAKE SHAKE
THAT'S WHY I—
AH! RYUSUKE!
WHIRL
THAT'S... IT CAN'T BE...

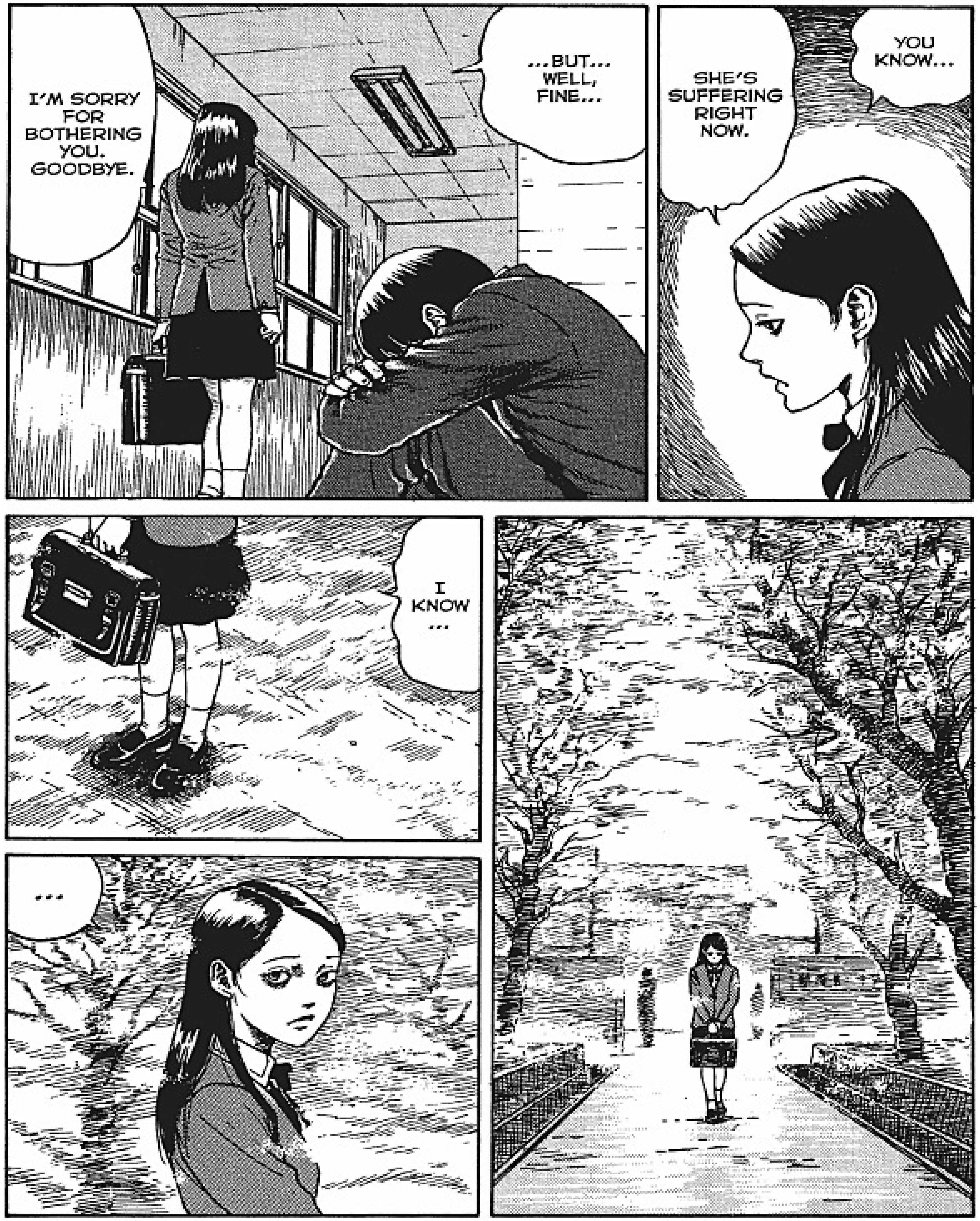

MIDORI!
SUZUE...
HUFF
HUFF
YOU'RE WALKING HOME ALONE AGAIN TODAY. WHAT HAPPENED TO RYUSUKE?
...
YEAH?
HUH?
HE'S AROUND.

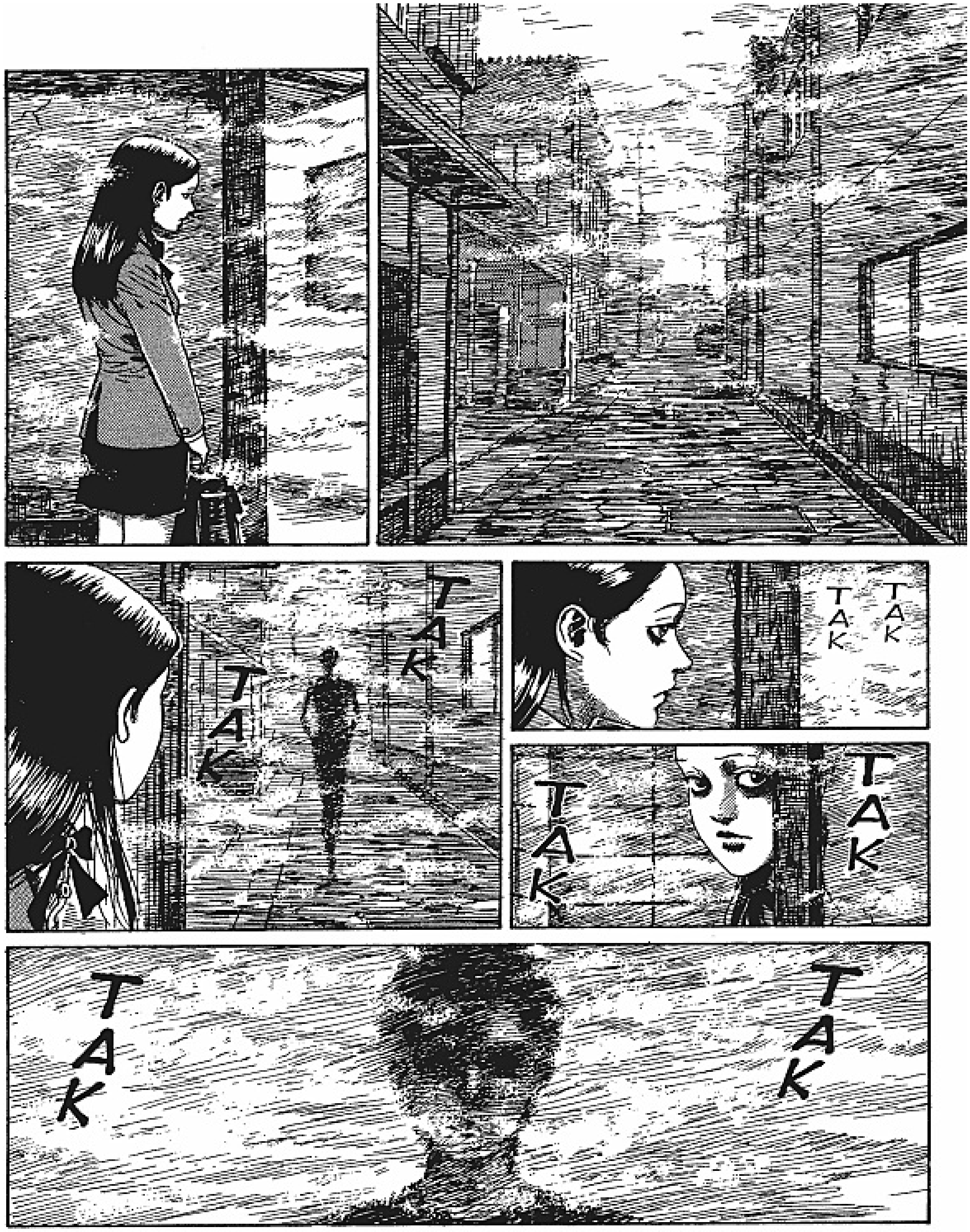

ANYWAY, SO... HAVE YOU HEARD OF THE BEAUTIFUL BOY AT THE CROSSROADS?
HUH? WHO'S THAT?
SO, LIKE, THAT SEVENTH GRADER KILLED HERSELF AT AN INTERSECTION, RIGHT?
NEW DEETS. RIGHT BEFORE, SHE CALLED A FRIEND.
IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT. I GUESS THE CALL WAS KIND OF WEIRD... SO, OKAY...
SHE SAID SHE WAS WAITING FOR A FORTUNE WHEN THIS GUY CAME ALONG, AND HE WAS SO BEAUTIFUL IT WAS LIKE HE WAS FROM ANOTHER PLANET. AND HE TOLD HER THAT SHE'D NEVER FIND LOVE.
SHE SAID HE WAS ALL IN BLACK, REALLY TALL, SUPER HANDSOME.
SHE WENT ON AND ON LIKE SHE WAS POSSESSED AND THEN HUNG UP.
MAYBE SHE WAS ALREADY STRANGE, EVEN BEFORE THE SUICIDE.
BUT IT'S A WEIRD STORY.
FUKUYO STORE
YEAH... IT IS...


YOU SEEM DOWN, MIDORI. DID SOMETHING HAPPEN?
ARE THINGS MAYBE NOT GOING WELL WITH RYUSUKE?
...
ACTUALLY, YOU'RE RIGHT.
IT'S LIKE HE'S BEEN AVOIDING ME LATELY.
I HAVE ZERO IDEA WHY, THOUGH... IT MUST BE BECAUSE HE HATES ME.
THAT'S... THERE'S NO WAY HE HATES YOU.
DO YOU WANT ME TO ASK HIM?
I'M SURE HE HAS SOME KIND OF REASON.
THANKS, SUZUE. THAT'S REALLY NICE OF YOU. BUT...
NO PROBLEM! LEAVE IT TO ME!


...SO MIDORI'S JUST WORRIED.
SHE EVEN CRIED.
THAT'S HOW MUCH SHE LIKES YOU—SO WHY ARE YOU AVOIDING HER?
DO YOU HATE HER NOW?
Staff Only
THAT'S WHAT SHE THINKS. THAT YOU HATE HER, RYUSUKE... IF THAT'S TRUE, WHAT EXACTLY DON'T YOU LIKE ABOUT HER?
...
AS IF I COULD HATE HER.


I DON'T DESERVE TO BE WITH HER.
I DON'T EVEN DESERVE TO TALK TO HER!
IT'S ALL MY FAULT...
...I CAN'T CHANGE THAT.
...RYU-SUKE.
...
WHAT'S WRONG? THIS IS TOTALLY NOT NORMAL. PLEASE TALK TO ME! I'M SURE I CAN HELP!
COME ON. WHAT HAPPENED? RYUSUKE... RYUSUKE!
JUST QUIT IT!
STOP BUGGING ME ABOUT THIS!
...
I FEEL LIKE THIS WAY, MIDORI WON'T HAVE TO SUFFER.


I'M SORRY FOR BOTHERING YOU. GOODBYE.
...BUT... WELL, FINE...
YOU KNOW...
SHE'S SUFFERING RIGHT NOW.
I KNOW ...
...


TAK
TAK
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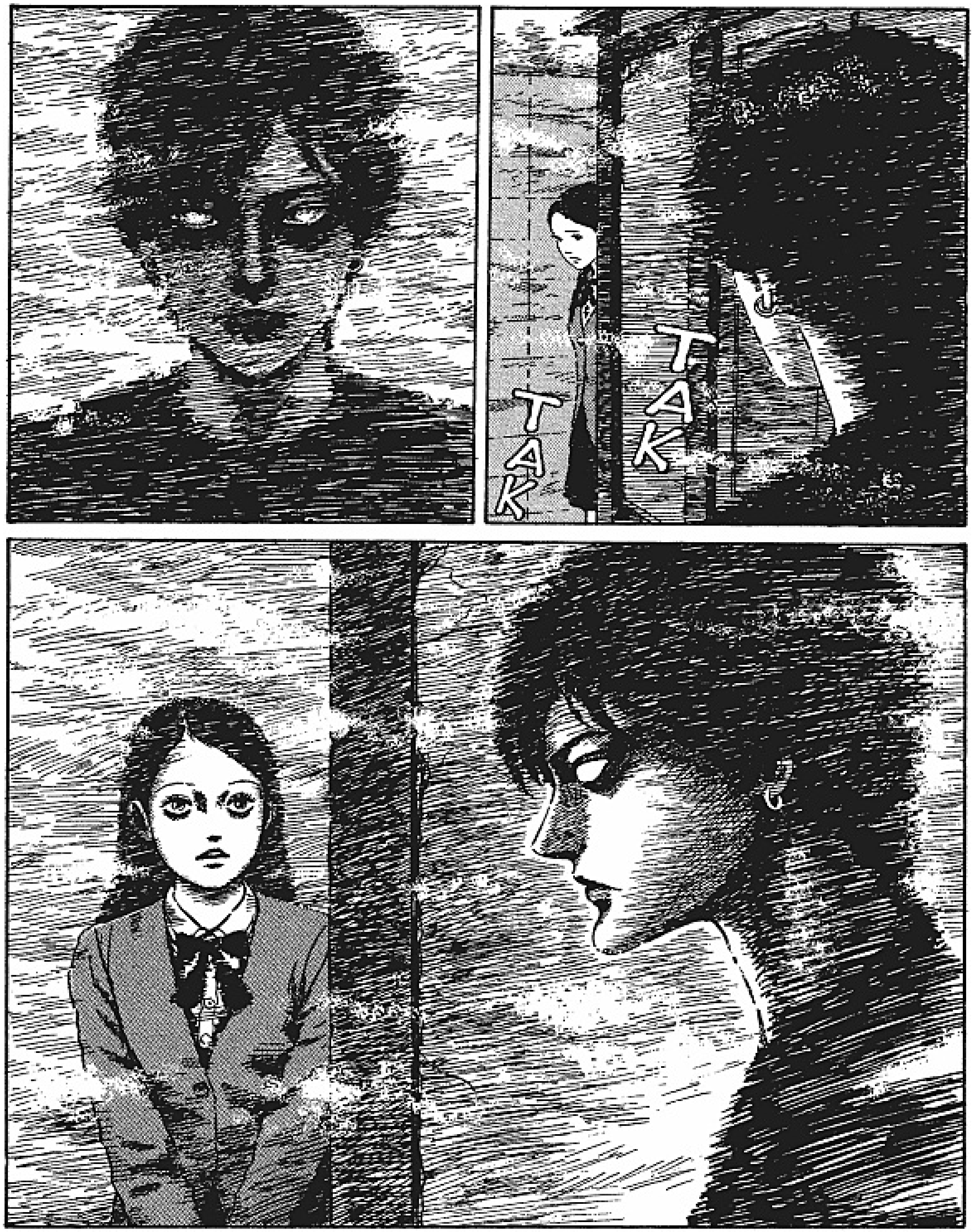
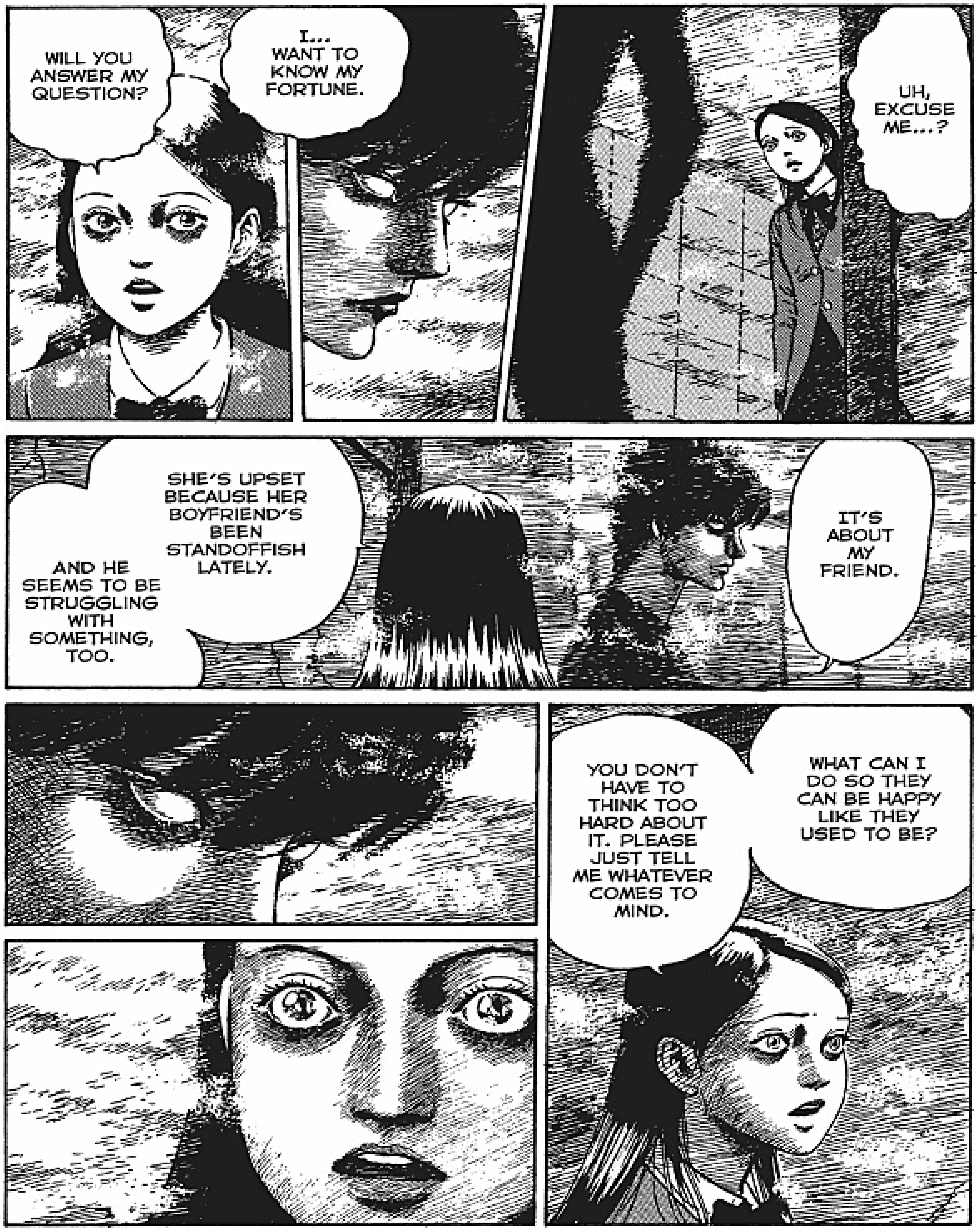
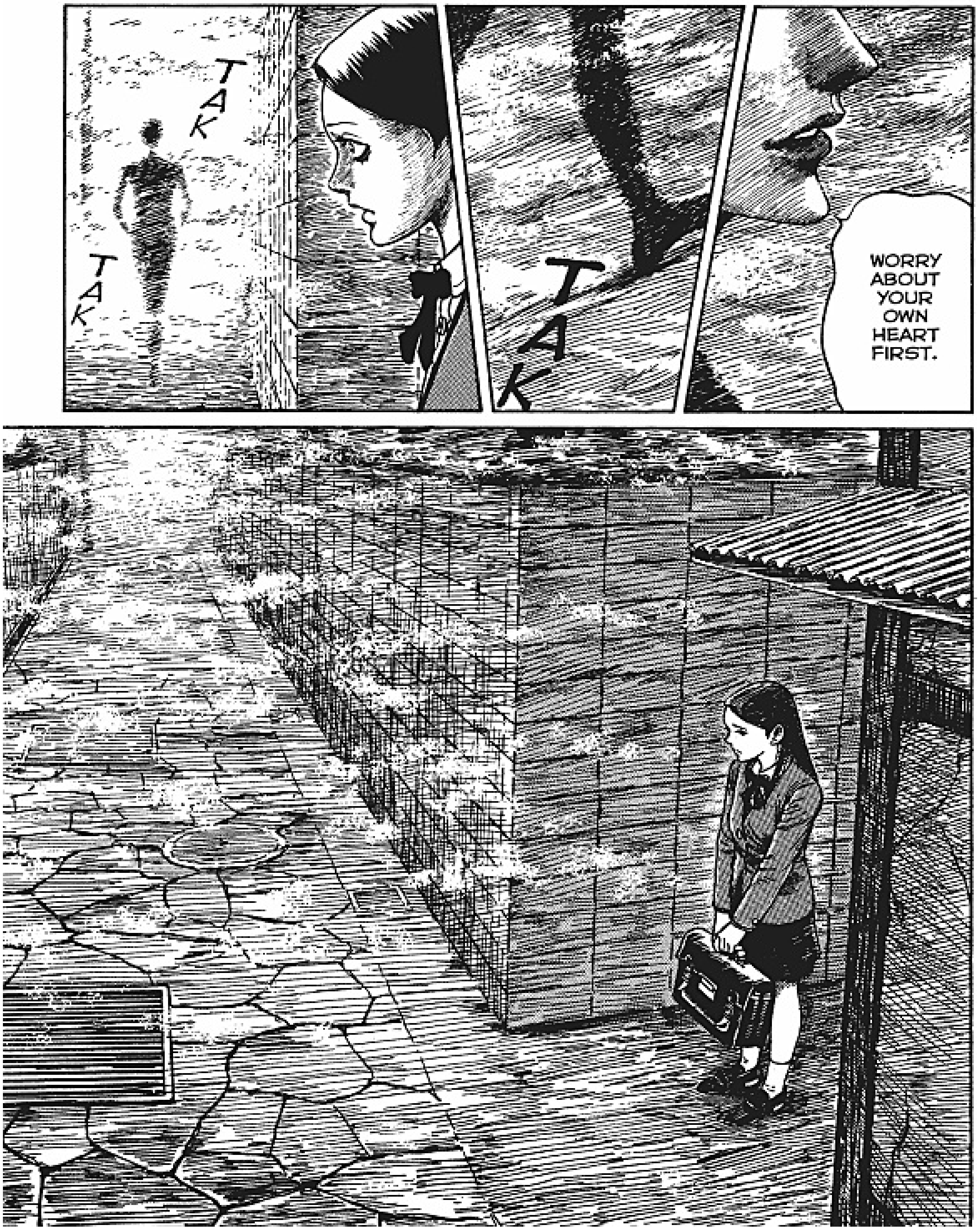
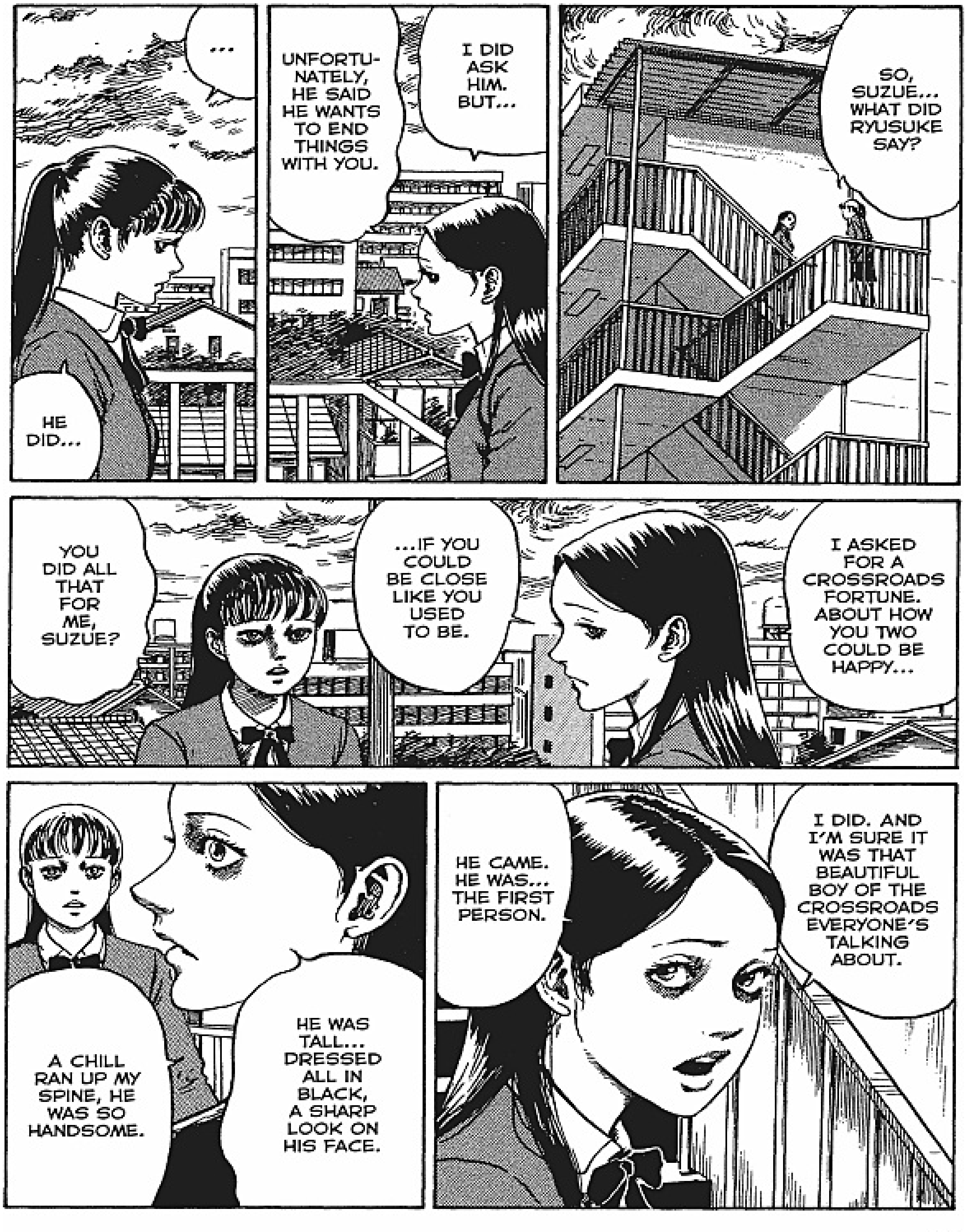
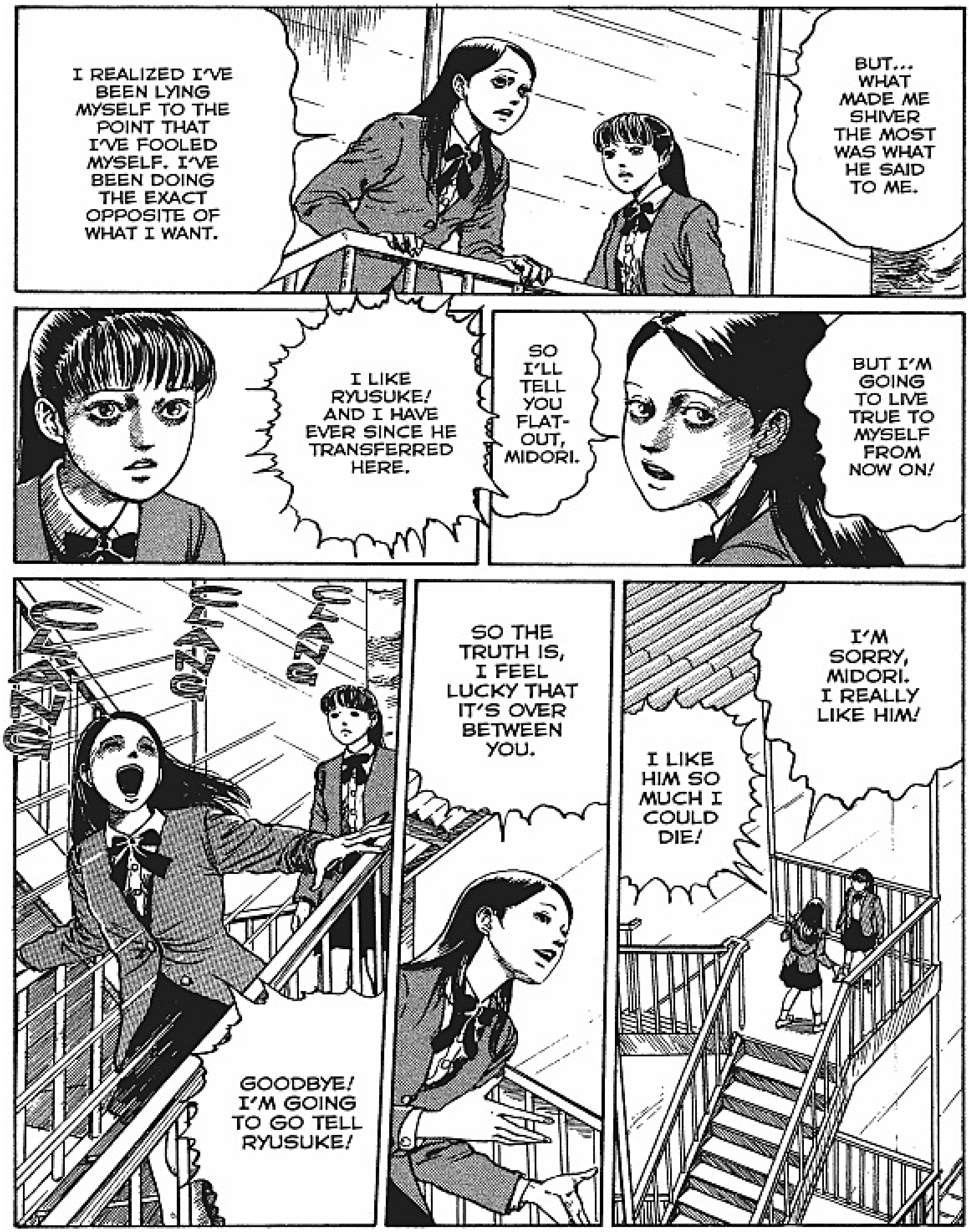
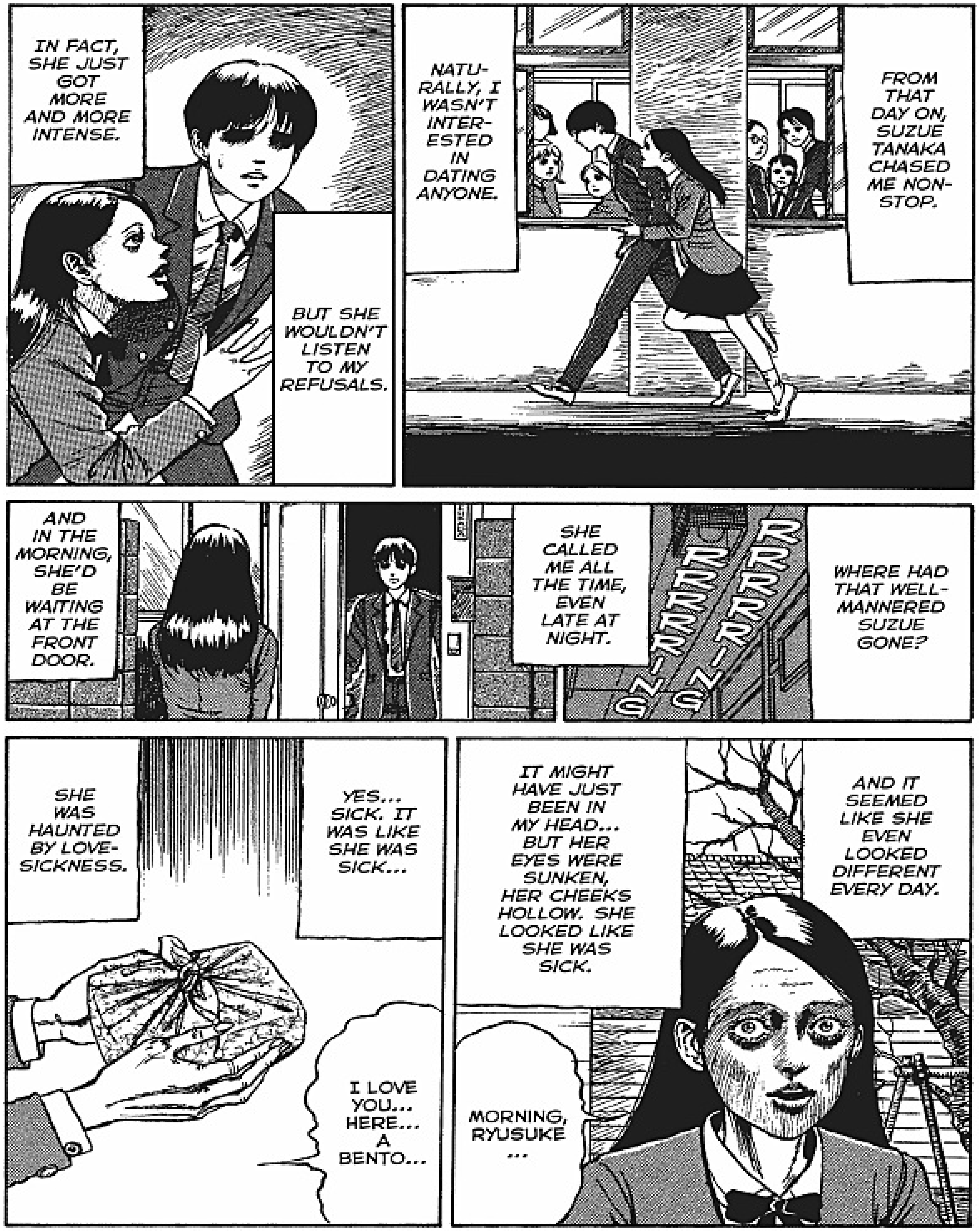

TAK
TAK

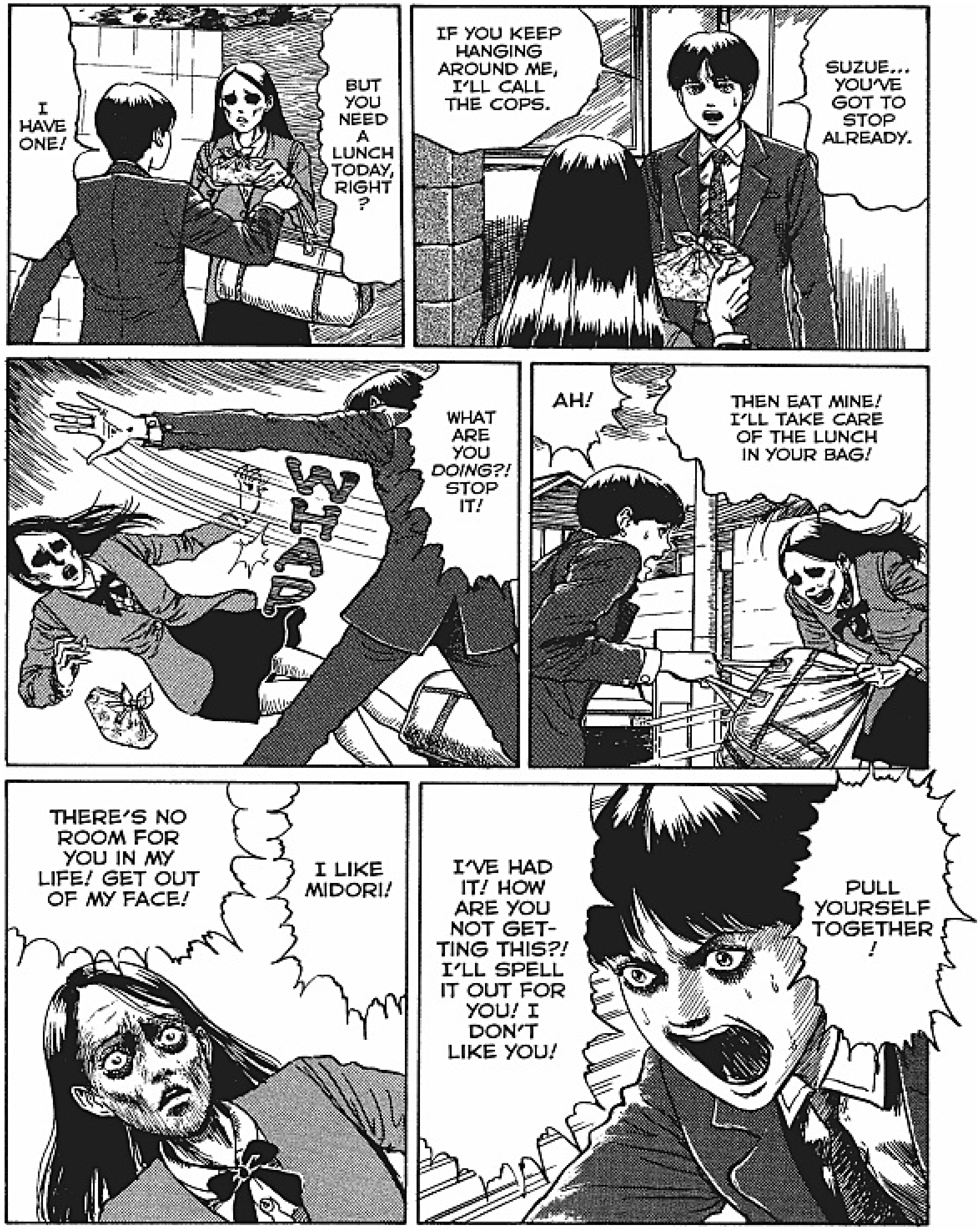

UH, EXCUSE ME...?
I... WANT TO KNOW MY FORTUNE.
WILL YOU ANSWER MY QUESTION?
IT'S ABOUT MY FRIEND.
SHE'S UPSET BECAUSE HER BOYFRIEND'S BEEN STANDOFFISH LATELY.
AND HE SEEMS TO BE STRUGGLING WITH SOMETHING, TOO.
WHAT CAN I DO SO THEY CAN BE HAPPY LIKE THEY USED TO BE?
YOU DON'T HAVE TO THINK TOO HARD ABOUT IT. PLEASE JUST TELL ME WHATEVER COMES TO MIND.

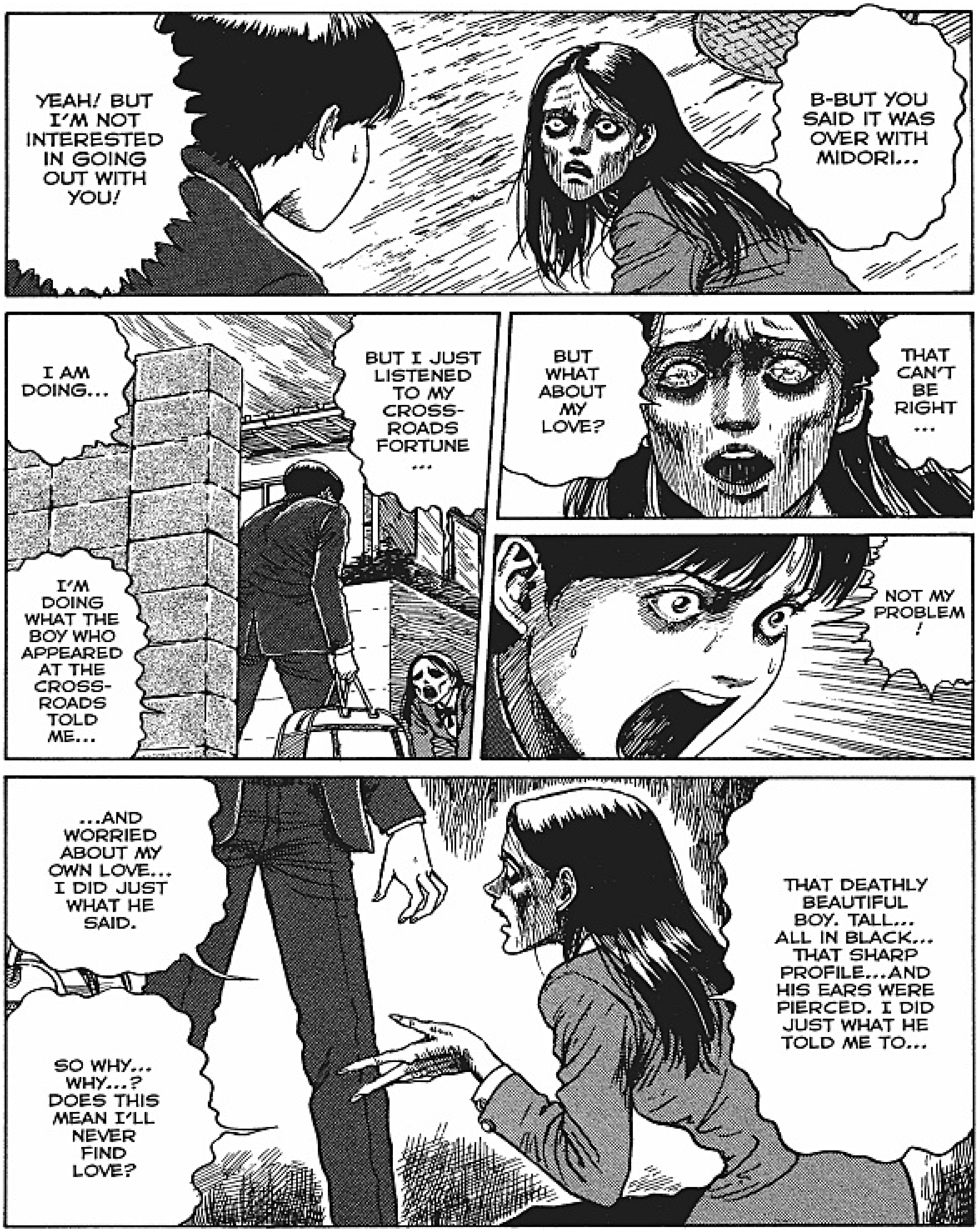

WORRY ABOUT YOUR OWN HEART FIRST.
TAK
TAK
TAK

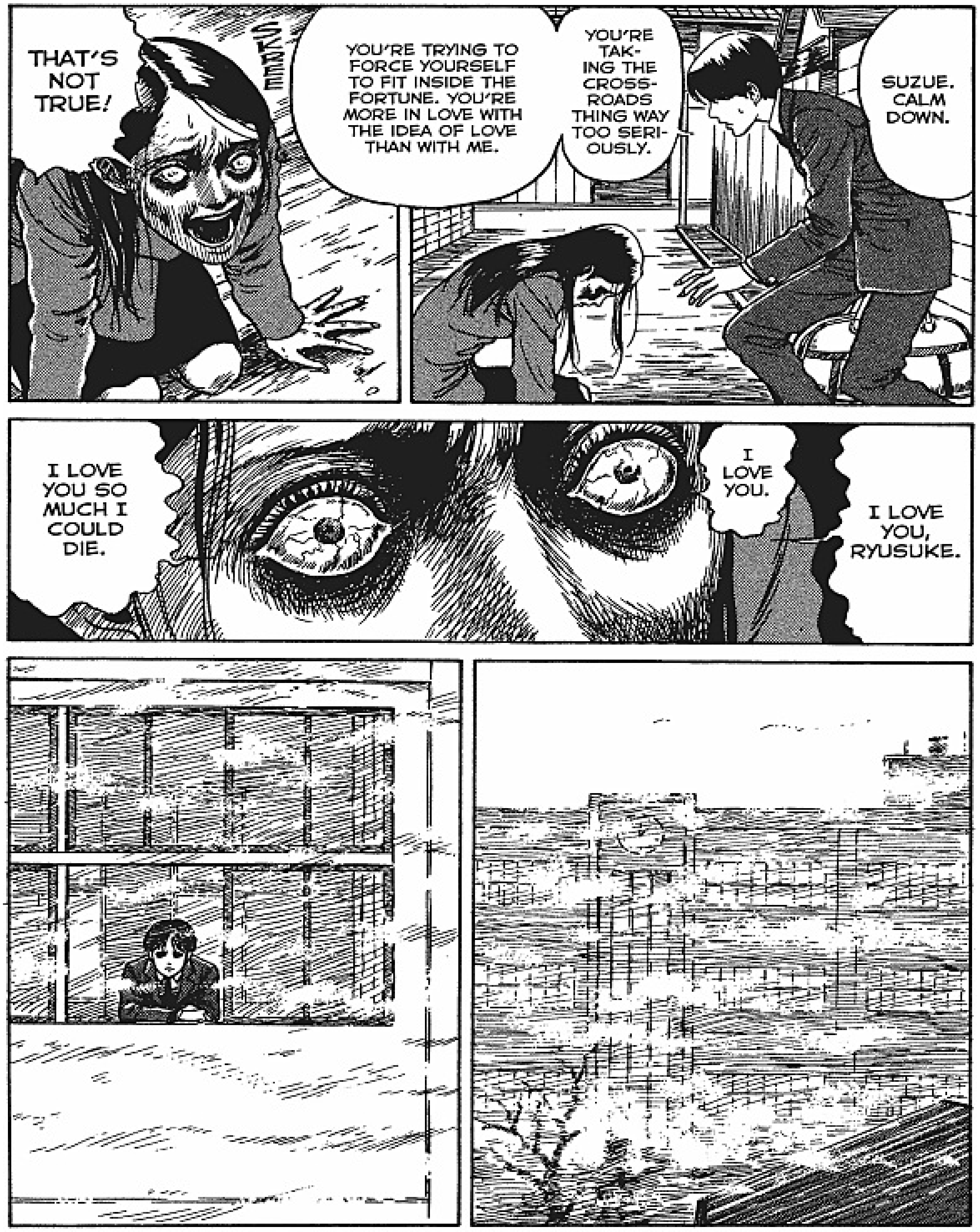

SO, SUZUE... WHAT DID RYUSUKE SAY?
I DID ASK HIM. BUT...
UNFORTUNATELY, HE SAID HE WANTS TO END THINGS WITH YOU.
...
HE DID...
I ASKED FOR A CROSSROADS FORTUNE. ABOUT HOW YOU TWO COULD BE HAPPY...
...IF YOU COULD BE CLOSE LIKE YOU USED TO BE.
YOU DID ALL THAT FOR ME, SUZUE?
I DID. AND I'M SURE IT WAS THAT BEAUTIFUL BOY OF THE CROSSROADS EVERYONE'S TALKING ABOUT.
HE CAME. HE WAS... THE FIRST PERSON.
HE WAS TALL... DRESSED ALL IN BLACK, A SHARP LOOK ON HIS FACE.
A CHILL RAN UP MY SPINE, HE WAS SO HANDSOME.

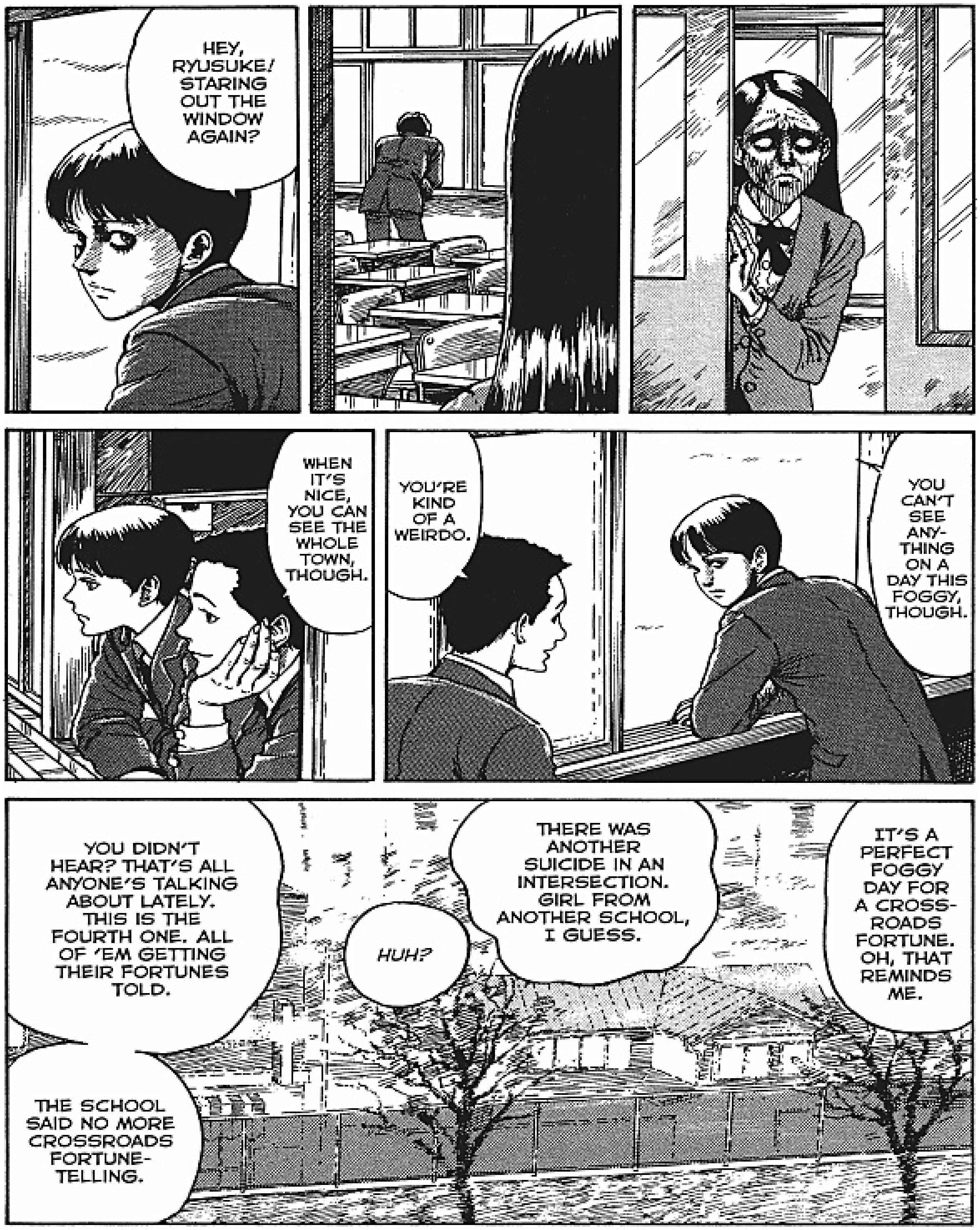

BUT... WHAT MADE ME SHIVER THE MOST WAS WHAT HE SAID TO ME.
I REALIZED I'VE BEEN LYING MYSELF TO THE POINT THAT I'VE FOOLED MYSELF. I'VE BEEN DOING THE EXACT OPPOSITE OF WHAT I WANT.
BUT I'M GOING TO LIVE TRUE TO MYSELF FROM NOW ON!
SO I'LL TELL YOU FLAT-OUT, MIDORI.
I LIKE RYUSUKE! AND I HAVE EVER SINCE HE TRANSFERRED HERE.
I'M SORRY, MIDORI. I REALLY LIKE HIM!
I LIKE HIM SO MUCH I COULD DIE!
SO THE TRUTH IS, I FEEL LUCKY THAT IT'S OVER BETWEEN YOU.
CLANG
CLANG
CLANG
GOODBYE! I'M GOING TO GO TELL RYUSUKE!

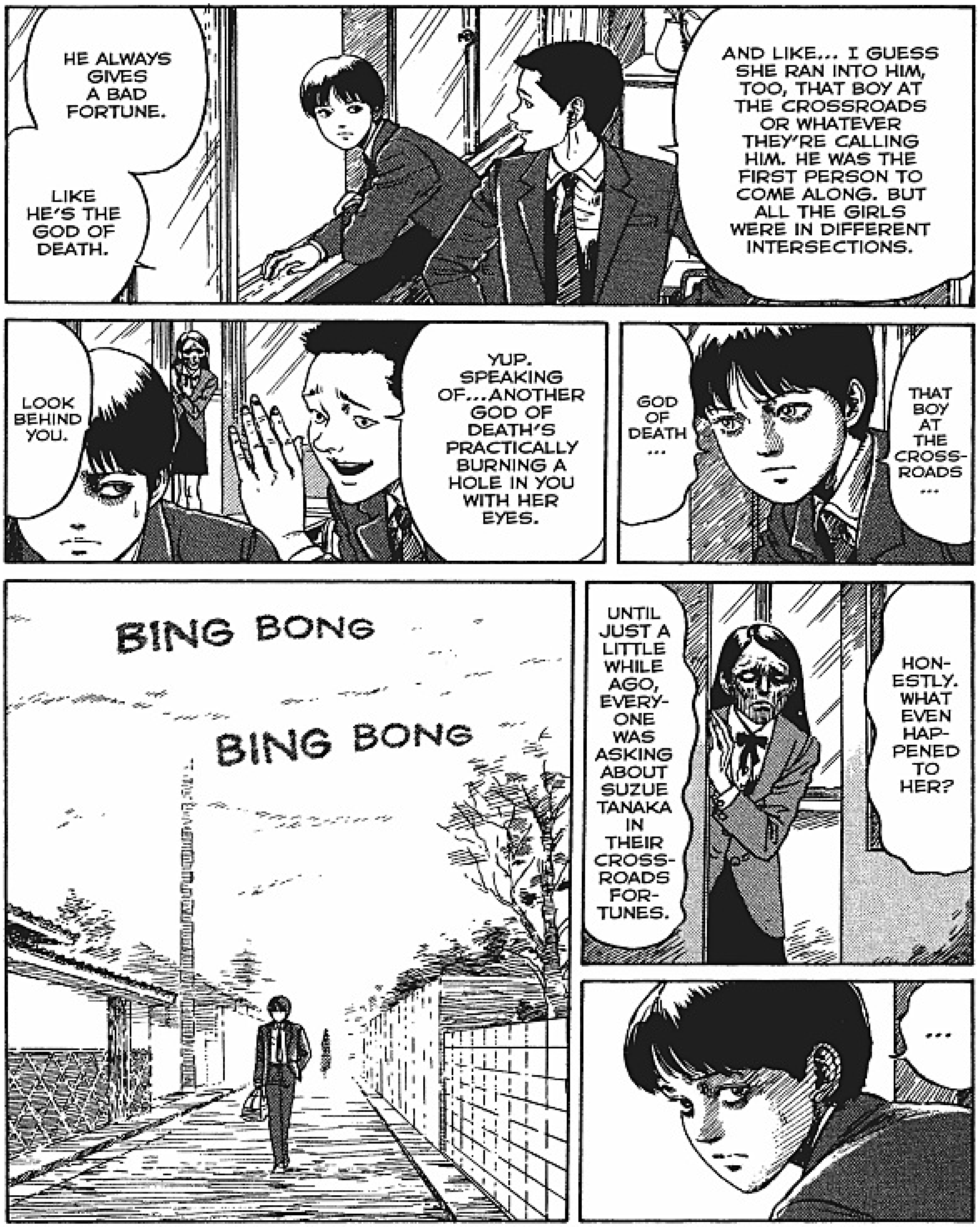

FROM THAT DAY ON, SUZUE TANAKA CHASED ME NON-STOP.
NATURALLY, I WASN'T INTERESTED IN DATING ANYONE.
IN FACT, SHE JUST GOT MORE AND MORE INTENSE.
BUT SHE WOULDN'T LISTEN TO MY REFUSALS.
WHERE HAD THAT WELL-MANNERED SUZUE GONE?
RRRRRING
RRRRRING
SHE CALLED ME ALL THE TIME, EVEN LATE AT NIGHT.
AND IN THE MORNING, SHE'D BE WAITING AT THE FRONT DOOR.
AND IT SEEMED LIKE SHE EVEN LOOKED DIFFERENT EVERY DAY.
IT MIGHT HAVE JUST BEEN IN MY HEAD... BUT HER EYES WERE SUNKEN, HER CHEEKS HOLLOW. SHE LOOKED LIKE SHE WAS SICK.
MORNING, RYUSUKE...
YES... SICK. IT WAS LIKE SHE WAS SICK...
SHE WAS HAUNTED BY LOVE-SICKNESS.
I LOVE YOU... HERE... A BENTO...

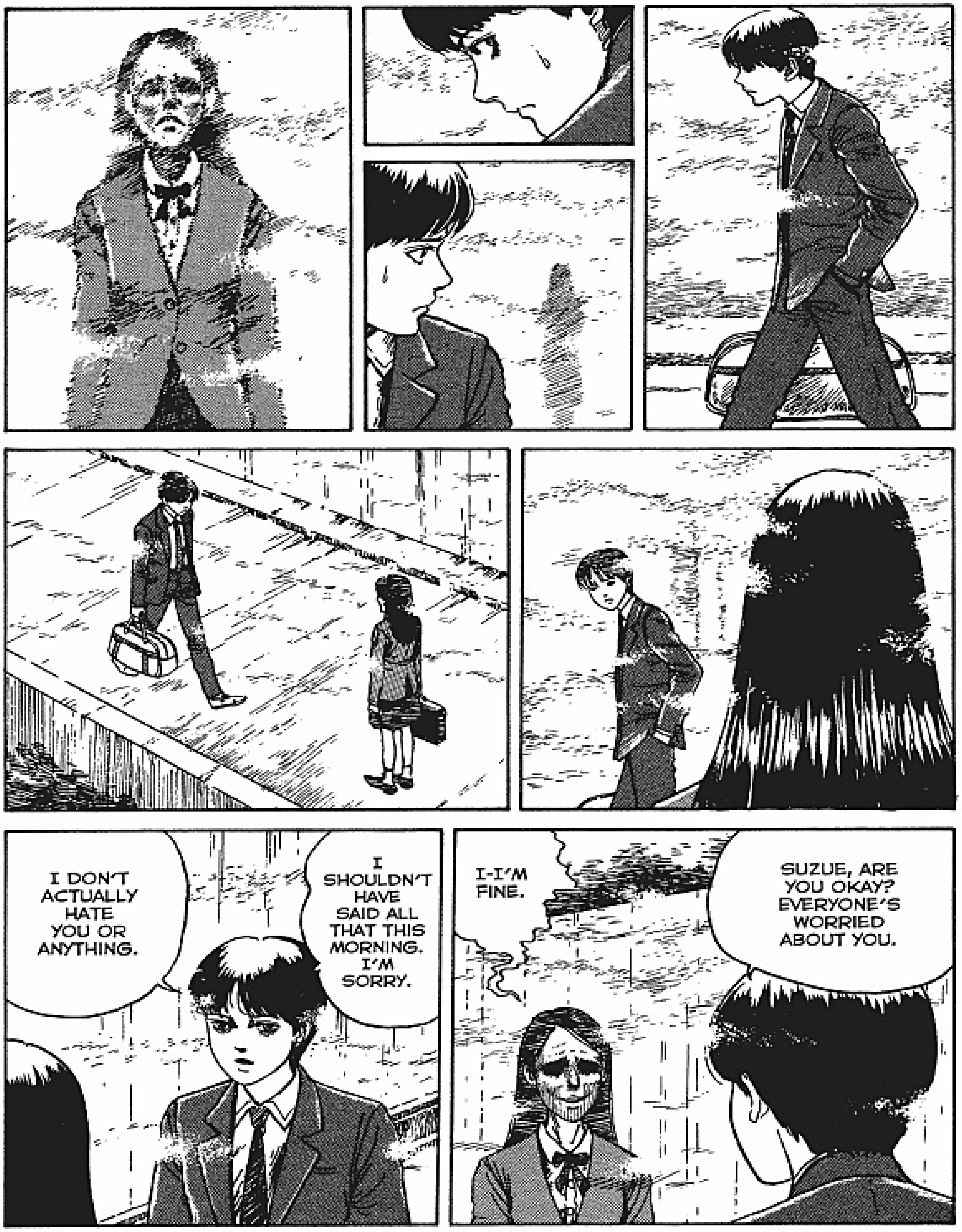

SUZUE... YOU'VE GOT TO STOP ALREADY.
IF YOU KEEP HANGING AROUND ME, I'LL CALL THE COPS.
BUT YOU NEED A LUNCH TODAY, RIGHT?
I HAVE ONE!
THEN EAT MINE! I'LL TAKE CARE OF THE LUNCH IN YOUR BAG!
AH!
WHAT ARE YOU *DOING?!* STOP IT!
WHAP
PULL YOURSELF TOGETHER!
I'VE HAD IT! HOW ARE YOU NOT GETTING THIS?! I'LL SPELL IT OUT FOR YOU! I DON'T LIKE YOU!
I LIKE MIDORI!
THERE'S NO ROOM FOR YOU IN MY LIFE! GET OUT OF MY FACE!

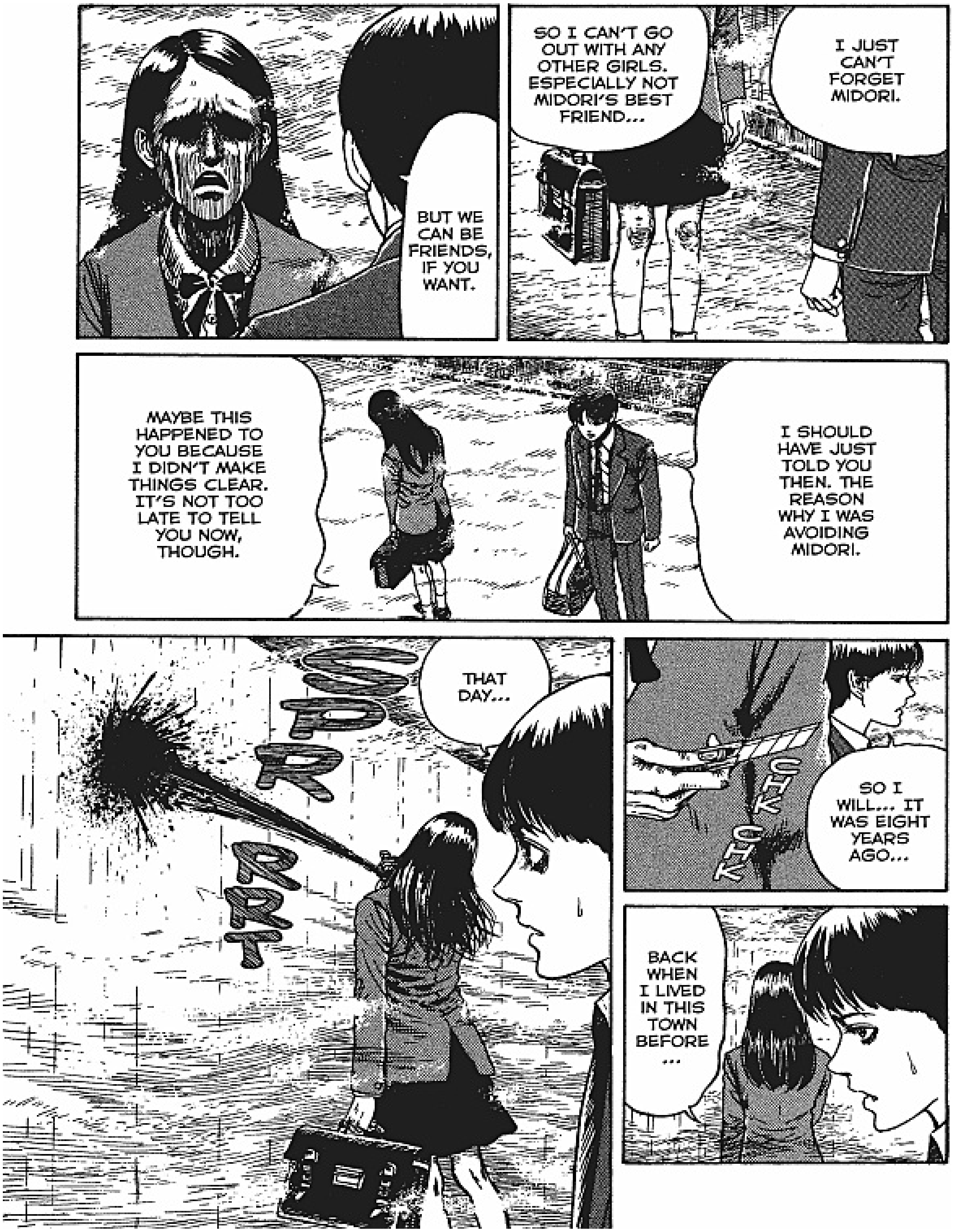

B-BUT YOU SAID IT WAS OVER WITH MIDORI...
YEAH! BUT I'M NOT INTERESTED IN GOING OUT WITH YOU!
THAT CAN'T BE RIGHT...
BUT WHAT ABOUT MY LOVE?
NOT MY PROBLEM!
BUT I JUST LISTENED TO MY CROSSROADS FORTUNE...
I AM DOING...
I'M DOING WHAT THE BOY WHO APPEARED AT THE CROSSROADS TOLD ME...
THAT DEATHLY BEAUTIFUL BOY. TALL... ALL IN BLACK... THAT SHARP PROFILE...AND HIS EARS WERE PIERCED. I DID JUST WHAT HE TOLD ME TO...
...AND WORRIED ABOUT MY OWN LOVE... I DID JUST WHAT HE SAID.
SO WHY... WHY...? DOES THIS MEAN I'LL NEVER FIND LOVE?

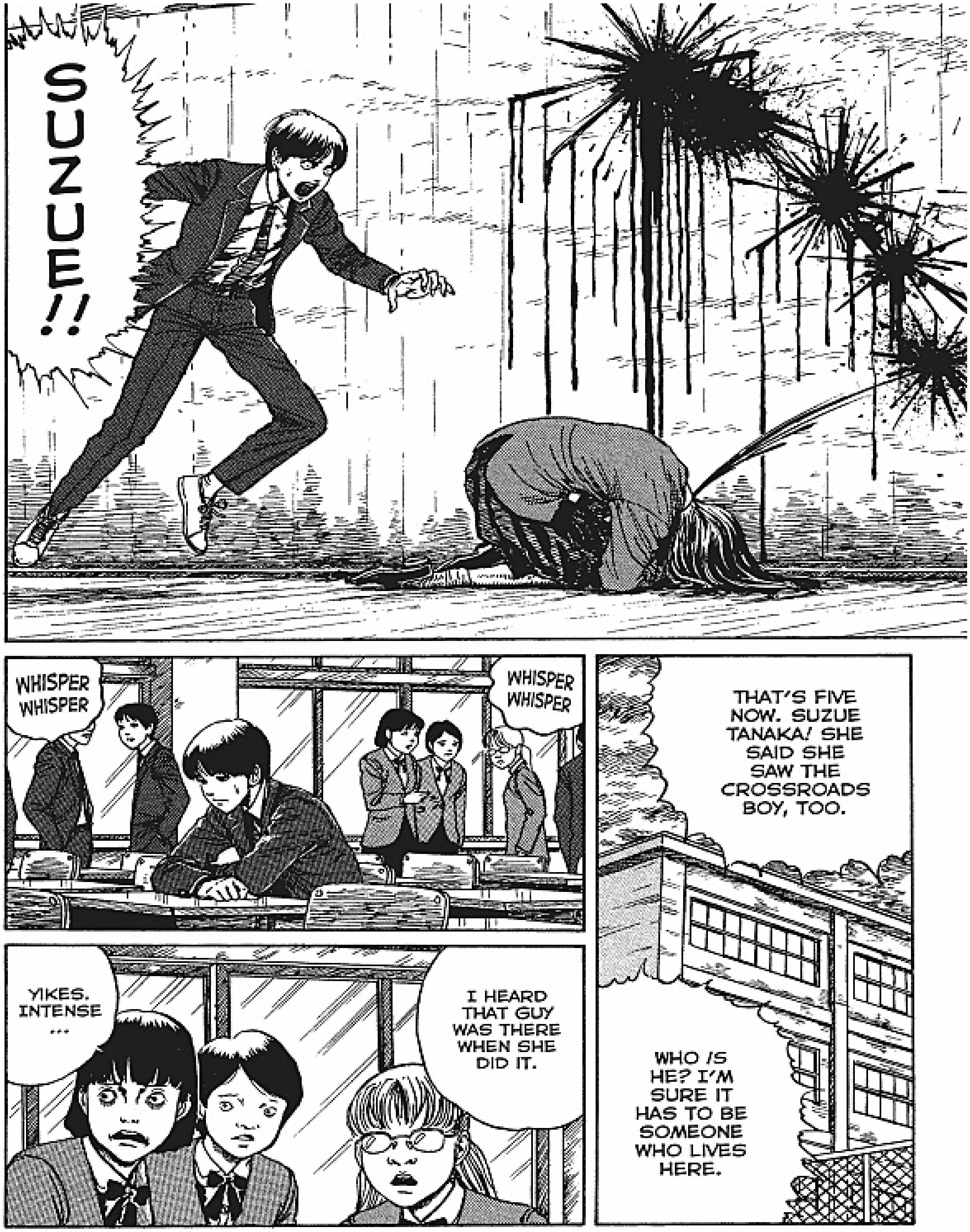

SUZUE. CALM DOWN.
YOU'RE TAKING THE CROSSROADS THING WAY TOO SERIOUSLY.
YOU'RE TRYING TO FORCE YOURSELF TO FIT INSIDE THE FORTUNE. YOU'RE MORE IN LOVE WITH THE IDEA OF LOVE THAN WITH ME.
SKREE
THAT'S NOT TRUE!
I LOVE YOU, RYUSUKE.
I LOVE YOU.
I LOVE YOU SO MUCH I COULD DIE.

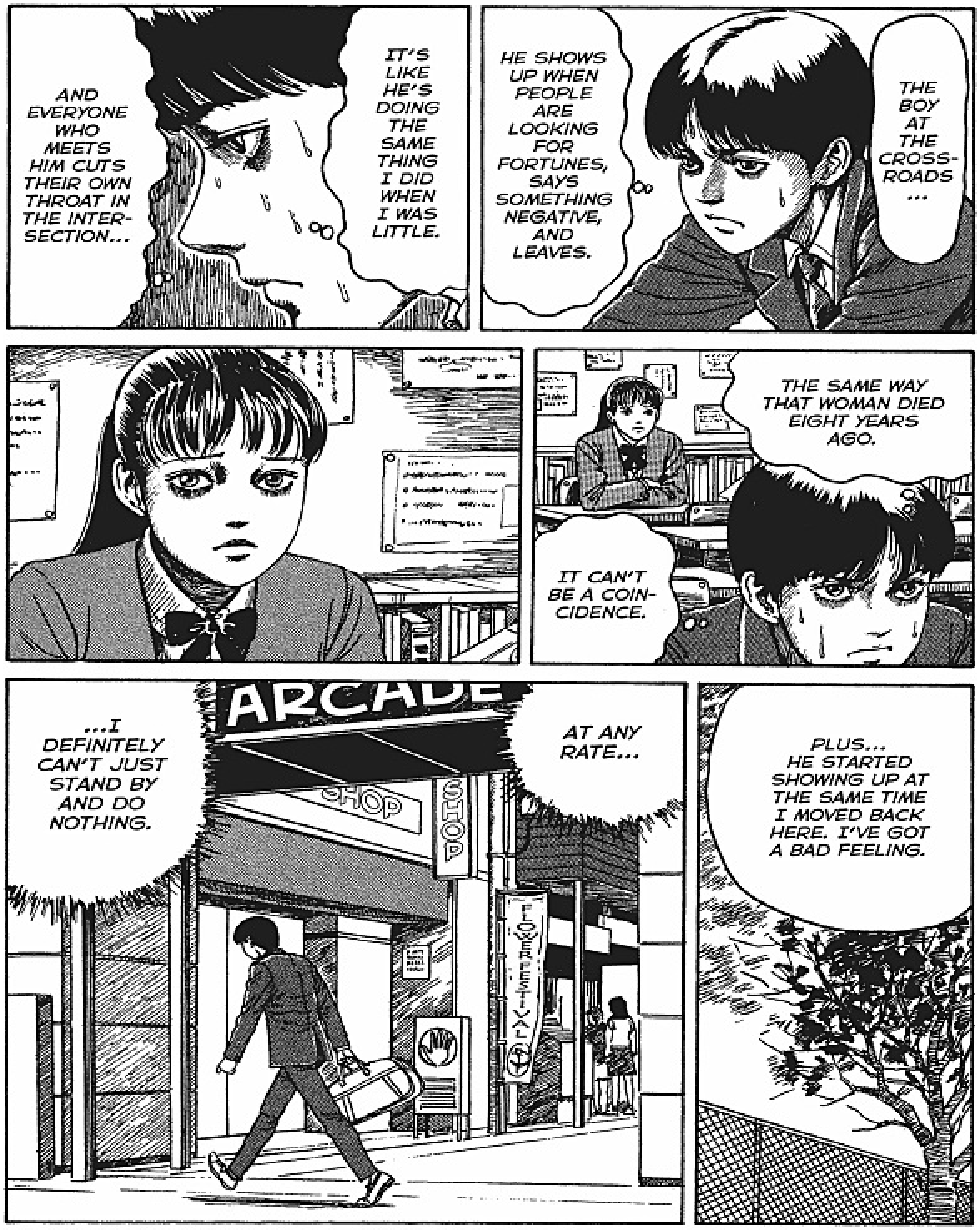

HEY, RYUSUKE! STARING OUT THE WINDOW AGAIN?
YOU CAN'T SEE ANYTHING ON A DAY THIS FOGGY, THOUGH.
YOU'RE KIND OF A WEIRDO.
WHEN IT'S NICE, YOU CAN SEE THE WHOLE TOWN, THOUGH.
IT'S A PERFECT FOGGY DAY FOR A CROSSROADS FORTUNE. OH, THAT REMINDS ME.
THERE WAS ANOTHER SUICIDE IN AN INTERSECTION. GIRL FROM ANOTHER SCHOOL, I GUESS.
HUH?
YOU DIDN'T HEAR? THAT'S ALL ANYONE'S TALKING ABOUT LATELY. THIS IS THE FOURTH ONE. ALL OF 'EM GETTING THEIR FORTUNES TOLD.
THE SCHOOL SAID NO MORE CROSSROADS FORTUNE-TELLING.

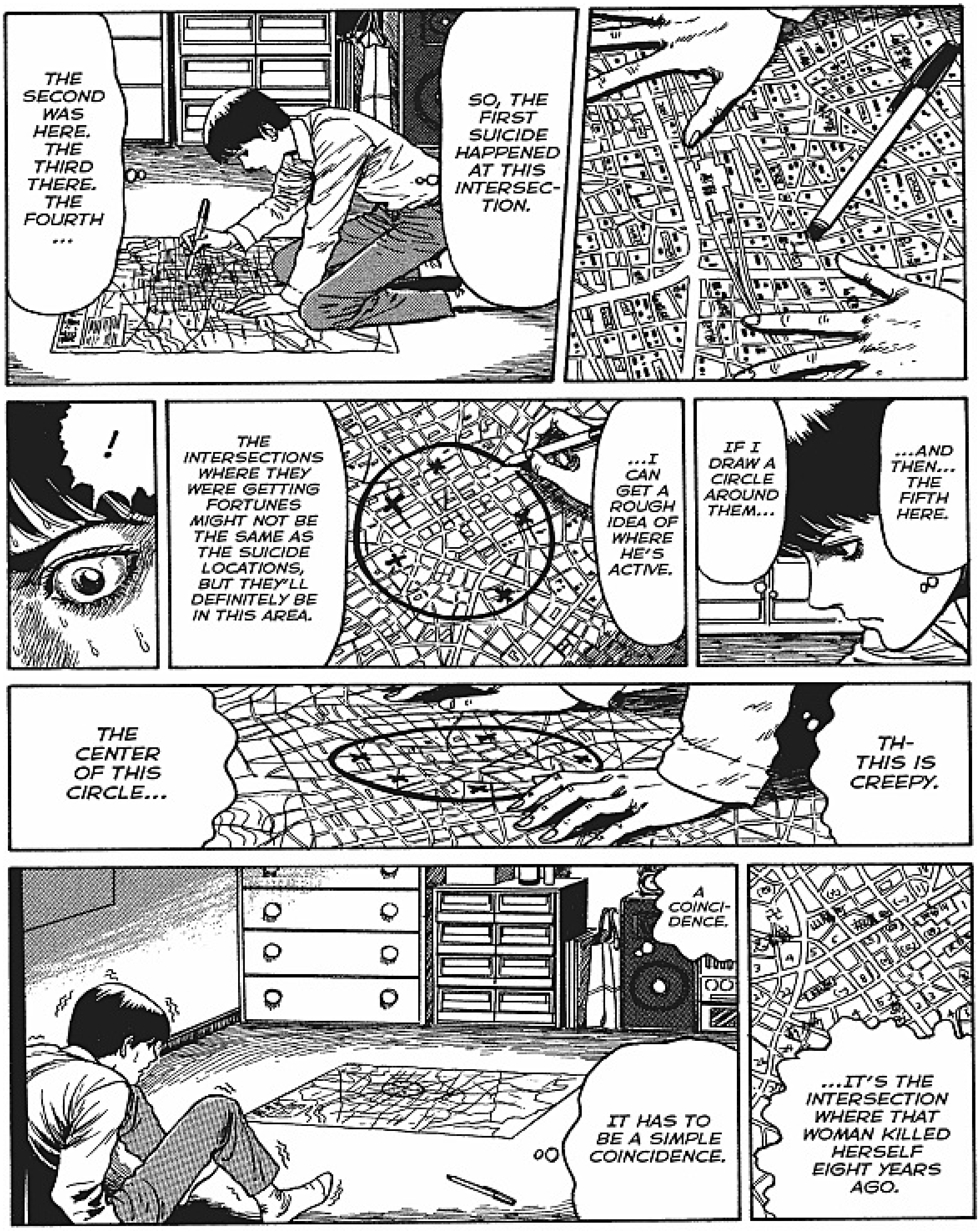

AND LIKE... I GUESS SHE RAN INTO HIM, TOO, THAT BOY AT THE CROSSROADS OR WHATEVER THEY'RE CALLING HIM. HE WAS THE FIRST PERSON TO COME ALONG. BUT ALL THE GIRLS WERE IN DIFFERENT INTERSECTIONS.
HE ALWAYS GIVES A BAD FORTUNE.
LIKE HE'S THE GOD OF DEATH.
THAT BOY AT THE CROSSROADS...
GOD OF DEATH...
YUP. SPEAKING OF...ANOTHER GOD OF DEATH'S PRACTICALLY BURNING A HOLE IN YOU WITH HER EYES.
LOOK BEHIND YOU.
HONESTLY. WHAT EVEN HAPPENED TO HER?
UNTIL JUST A LITTLE WHILE AGO, EVERYONE WAS ASKING ABOUT SUZUE TANAKA IN THEIR CROSSROADS FORTUNES.
...
BING BONG
BING BONG

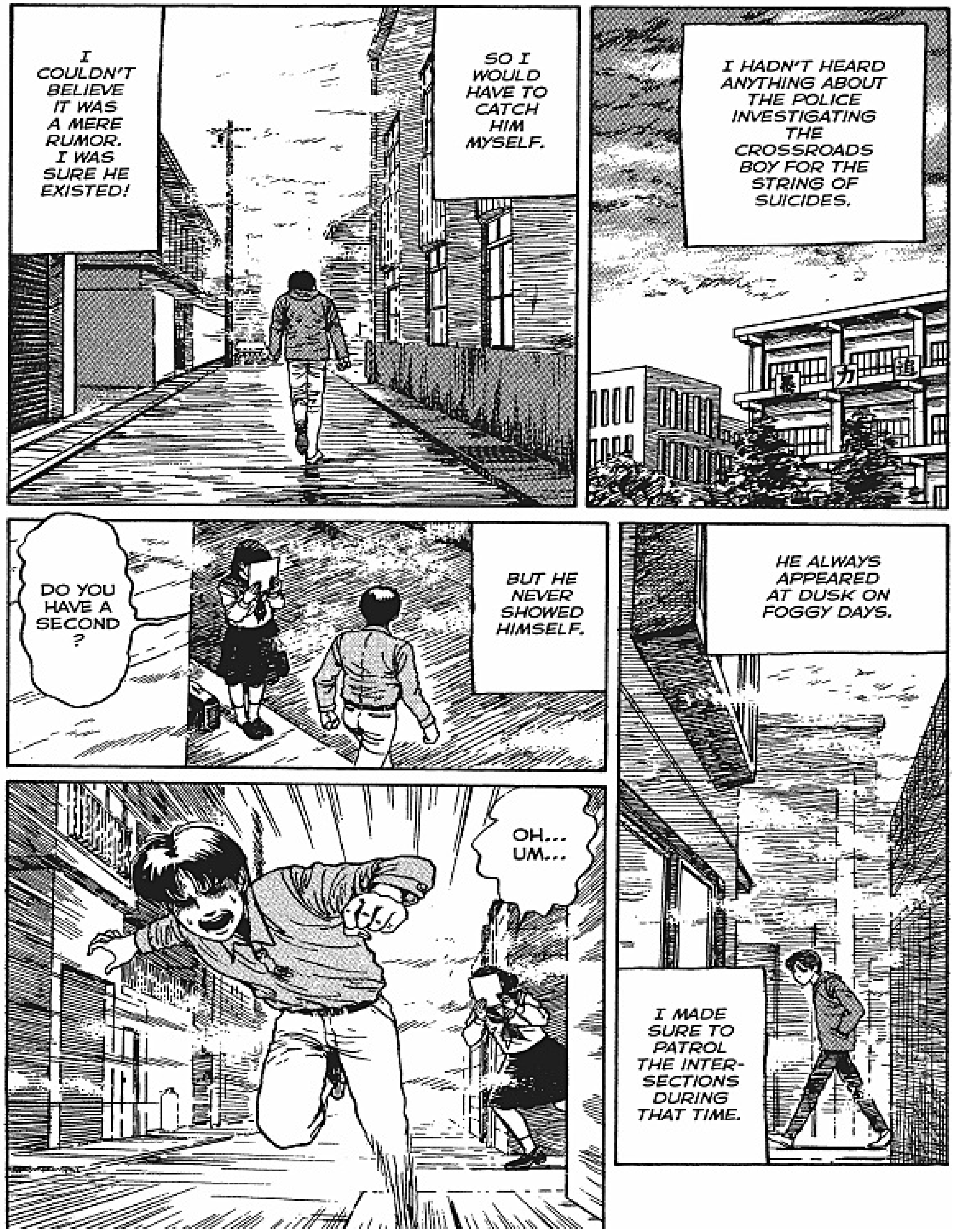

SUZUE, ARE YOU OKAY? EVERYONE'S WORRIED ABOUT YOU.
I-I'M FINE.
I SHOULDN'T HAVE SAID ALL THAT THIS MORNING. I'M SORRY.
I DON'T ACTUALLY HATE YOU OR ANYTHING.

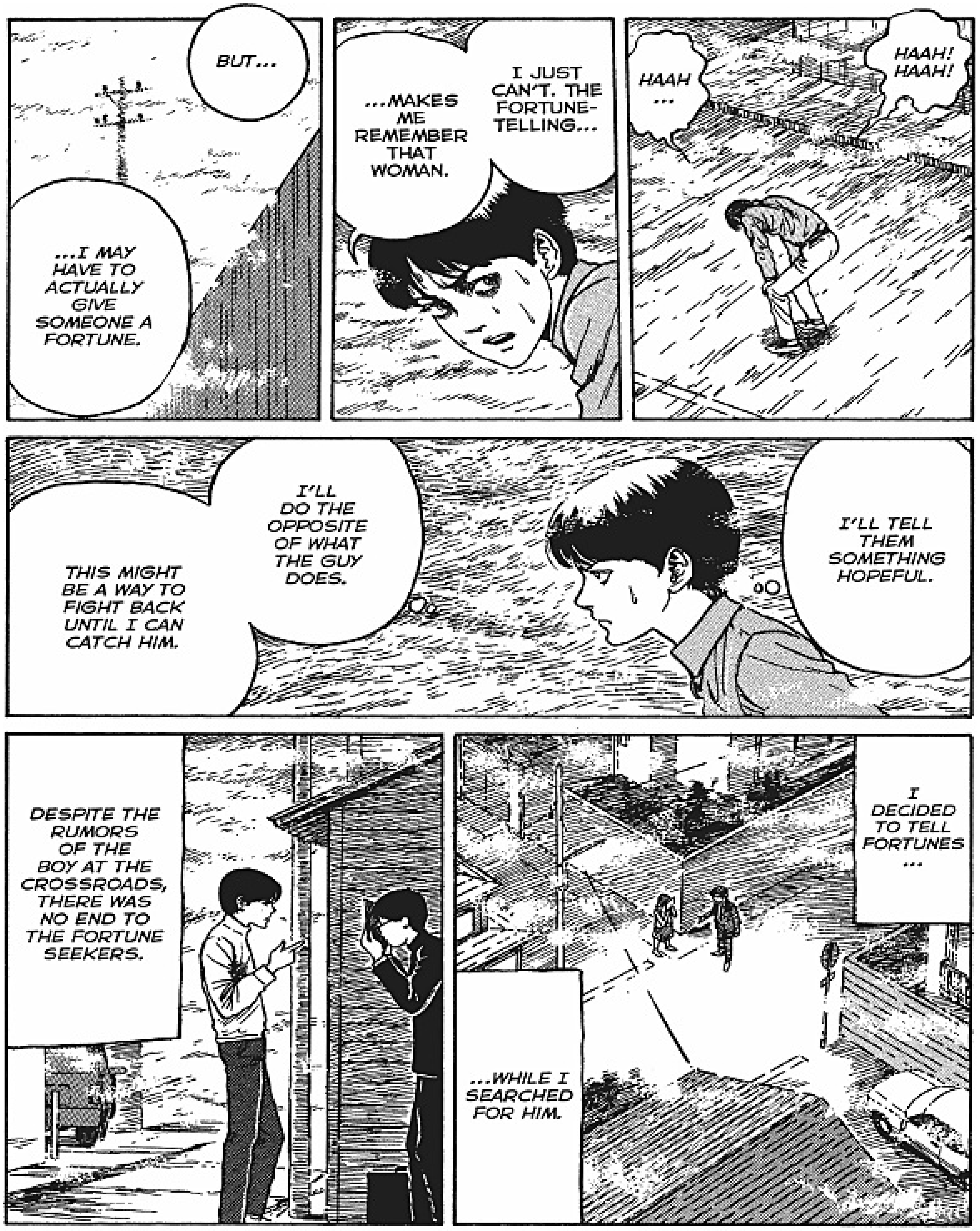

I JUST CAN'T FORGET MIDORI.
SO I CAN'T GO OUT WITH ANY OTHER GIRLS. ESPECIALLY NOT MIDORI'S BEST FRIEND...
BUT WE CAN BE FRIENDS, IF YOU WANT.
I SHOULD HAVE JUST TOLD YOU THEN. THE REASON WHY I WAS AVOIDING MIDORI.
MAYBE THIS HAPPENED TO YOU BECAUSE I DIDN'T MAKE THINGS CLEAR. IT'S NOT TOO LATE TO TELL YOU NOW, THOUGH.
CHK CHK CHK
SO I WILL... IT WAS EIGHT YEARS AGO...
BACK WHEN I LIVED IN THIS TOWN BEFORE...
THAT DAY...
SPRRRT

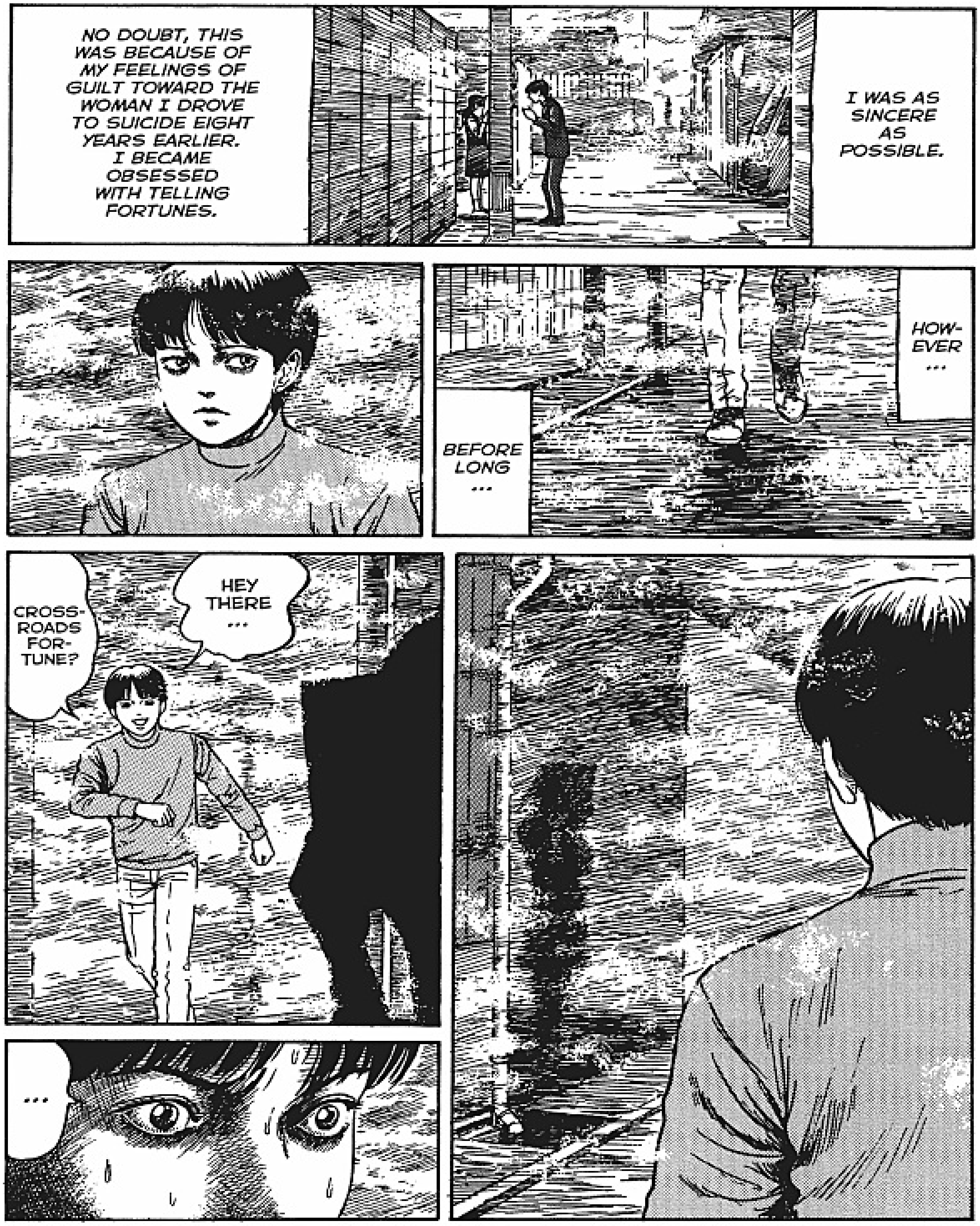

SUZUE!!
THAT'S FIVE NOW. SUZUE TANAKA! SHE SAID SHE SAW THE CROSSROADS BOY, TOO.
WHO *IS* HE? I'M SURE IT HAS TO BE SOMEONE WHO LIVES HERE.
WHISPER WHISPER
WHISPER WHISPER
I HEARD THAT GUY WAS THERE WHEN SHE DID IT.
YIKES. INTENSE ...

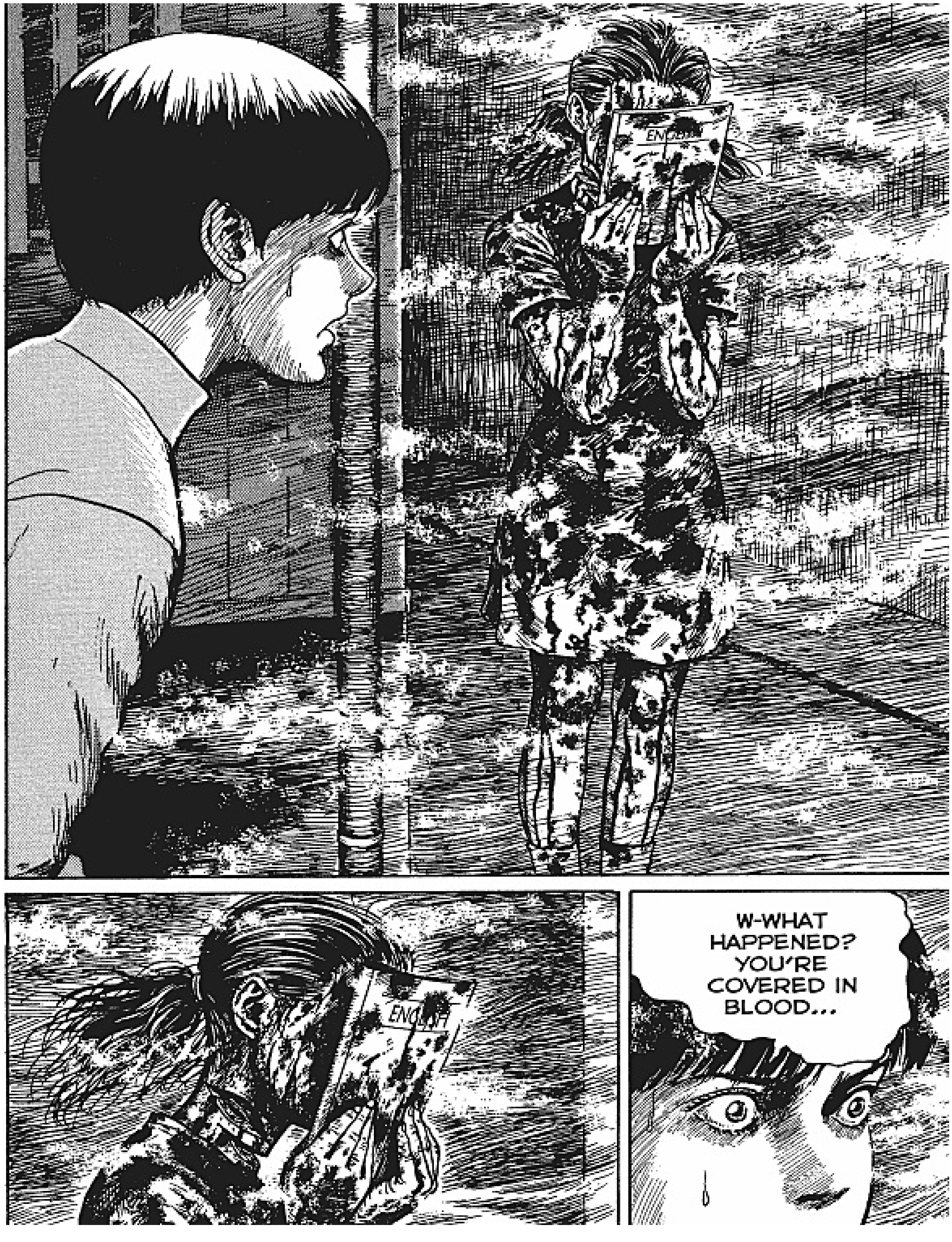

THE BOY AT THE CROSSROADS...
HE SHOWS UP WHEN PEOPLE ARE LOOKING FOR FORTUNES, SAYS SOMETHING NEGATIVE, AND LEAVES.
IT'S LIKE HE'S DOING THE SAME THING I DID WHEN I WAS LITTLE.
AND EVERYONE WHO MEETS HIM CUTS THEIR OWN THROAT IN THE INTERSECTION...
THE SAME WAY THAT WOMAN DIED EIGHT YEARS AGO.
IT CAN'T BE A COINCIDENCE.
PLUS... HE STARTED SHOWING UP AT THE SAME TIME I MOVED BACK HERE. I'VE GOT A BAD FEELING.
ARCADE
SHOP
SHOP
FLOWER FESTIVAL
AT ANY RATE...
...I DEFINITELY CAN'T JUST STAND BY AND DO NOTHING.

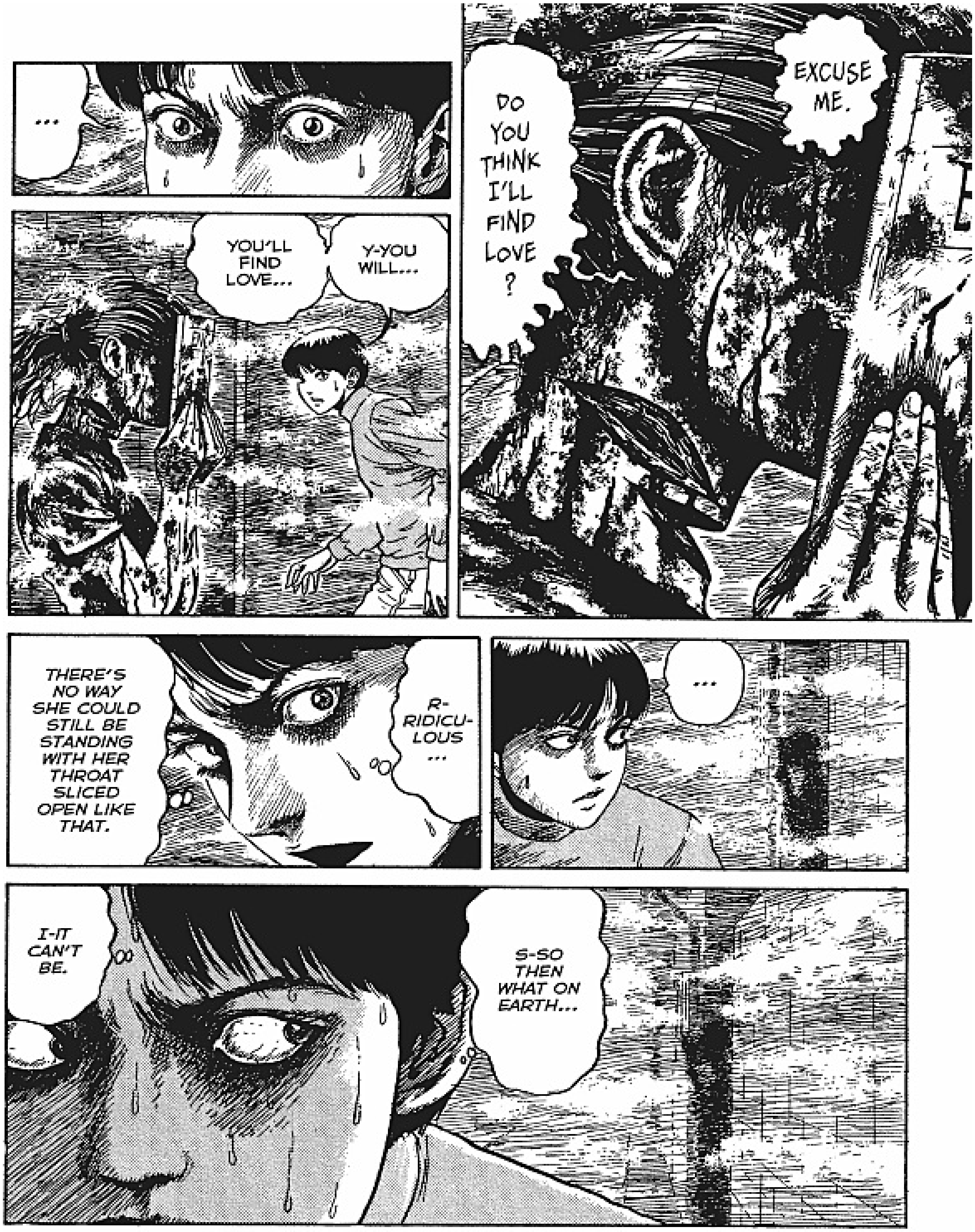

SO, THE FIRST SUICIDE HAPPENED AT THIS INTERSECTION.
THE SECOND WAS HERE. THE THIRD THERE. THE FOURTH ...
...AND THEN... THE FIFTH HERE.
IF I DRAW A CIRCLE AROUND THEM...
...I CAN GET A ROUGH IDEA OF WHERE HE'S ACTIVE.
THE INTERSECTIONS WHERE THEY WERE GETTING FORTUNES MIGHT NOT BE THE SAME AS THE SUICIDE LOCATIONS, BUT THEY'LL DEFINITELY BE IN THIS AREA.
!
TH- THIS IS CREEPY.
THE CENTER OF THIS CIRCLE...
...IT'S THE INTERSECTION WHERE THAT WOMAN KILLED HERSELF EIGHT YEARS AGO.
A COINCIDENCE.
IT HAS TO BE A SIMPLE COINCIDENCE.

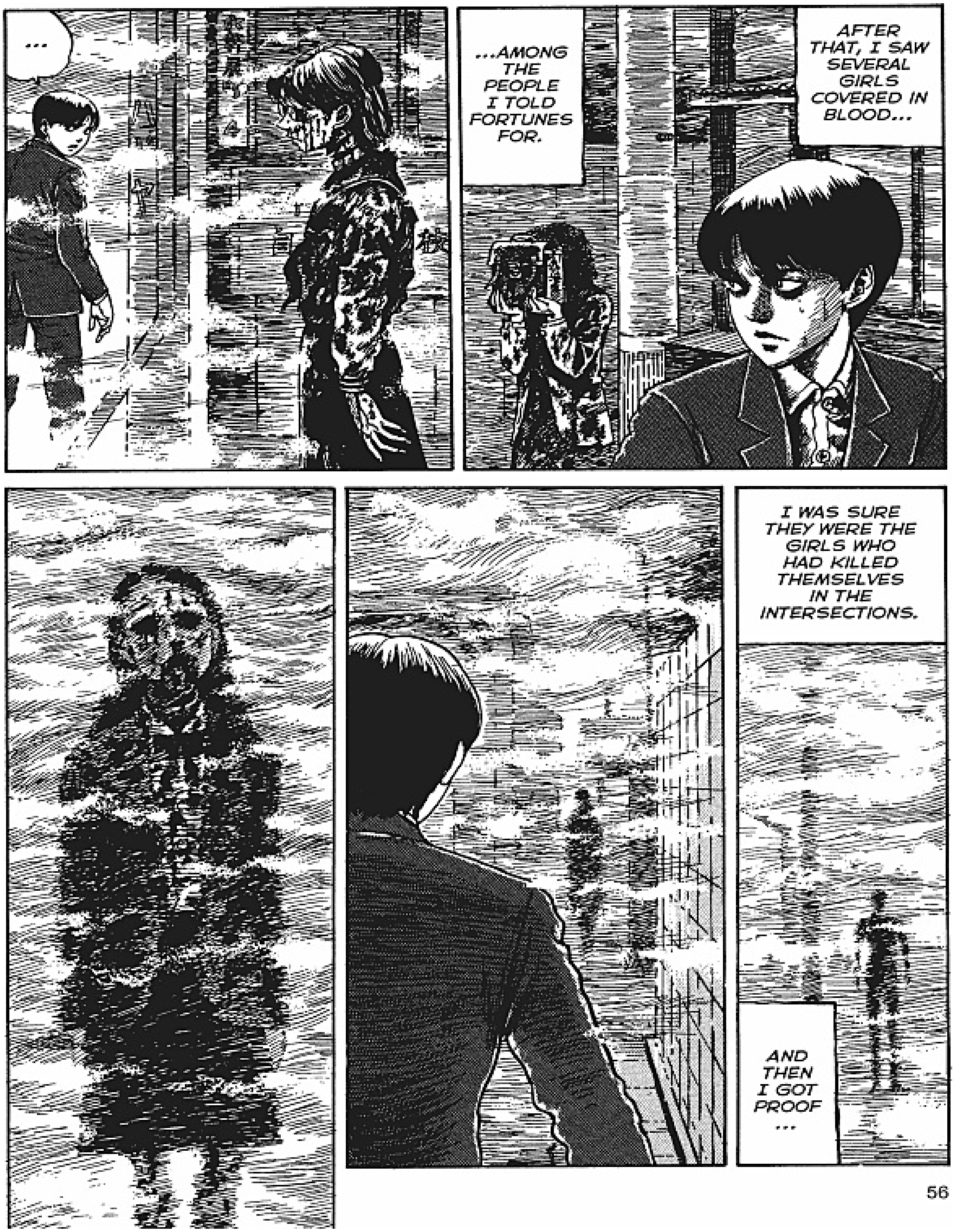

I HADN'T HEARD ANYTHING ABOUT THE POLICE INVESTIGATING THE CROSSROADS BOY FOR THE STRING OF SUICIDES.
I COULDN'T BELIEVE IT WAS A MERE RUMOR. I WAS SURE HE EXISTED!
SO I WOULD HAVE TO CATCH HIM MYSELF.
HE ALWAYS APPEARED AT DUSK ON FOGGY DAYS.
I MADE SURE TO PATROL THE INTERSECTIONS DURING THAT TIME.
BUT HE NEVER SHOWED HIMSELF.
DO YOU HAVE A SECOND?
OH... UM...

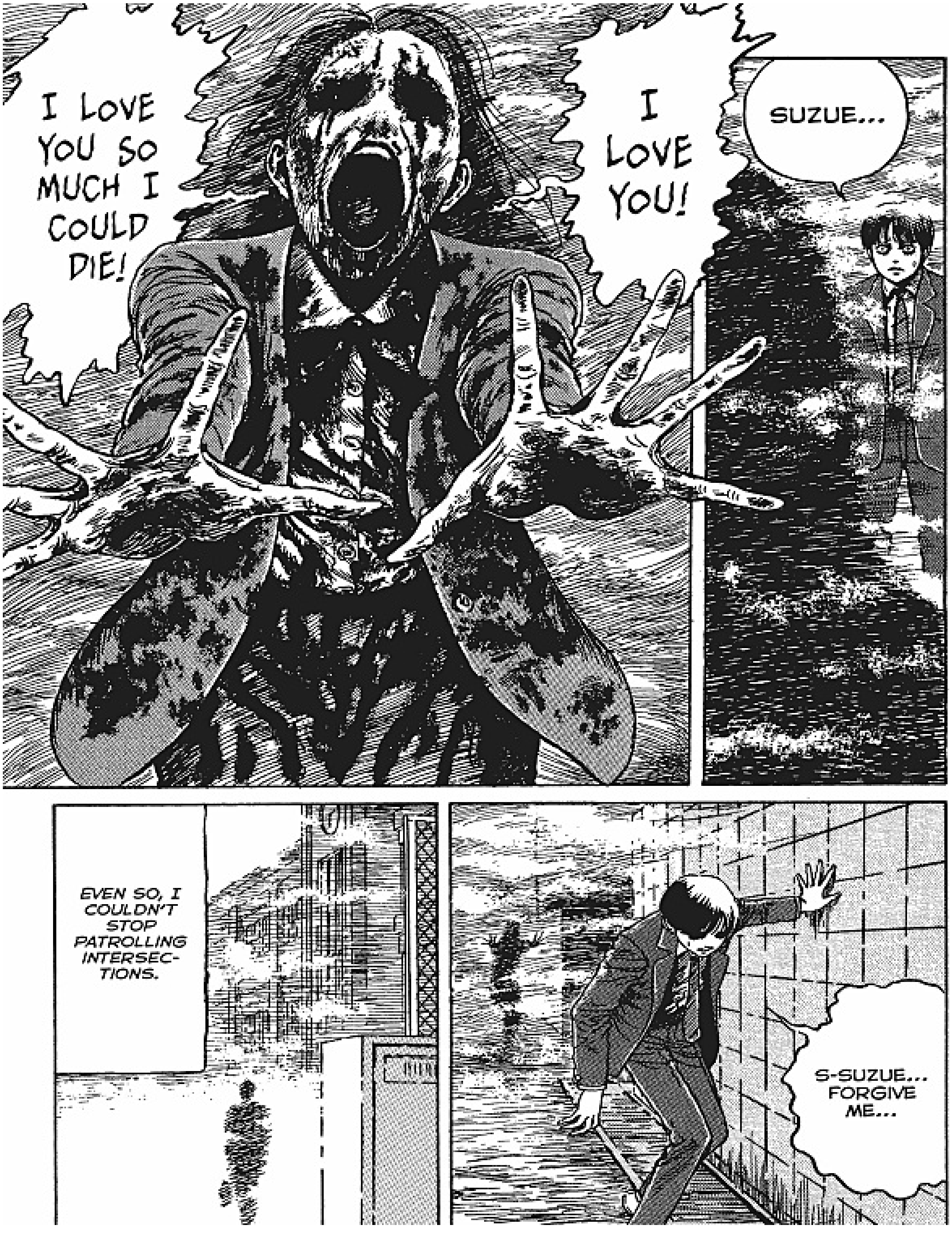

HAAH! HAAH!
HAAH ...
I JUST CAN'T. THE FORTUNE-TELLING...
...MAKES ME REMEMBER THAT WOMAN.
BUT...
...I MAY HAVE TO ACTUALLY GIVE SOMEONE A FORTUNE.
I'LL TELL THEM SOMETHING HOPEFUL.
I'LL DO THE OPPOSITE OF WHAT THE GUY DOES.
THIS MIGHT BE A WAY TO FIGHT BACK UNTIL I CAN CATCH HIM.
I DECIDED TO TELL FORTUNES ...
...WHILE I SEARCHED FOR HIM.
DESPITE THE RUMORS OF THE BOY AT THE CROSSROADS, THERE WAS NO END TO THE FORTUNE SEEKERS.

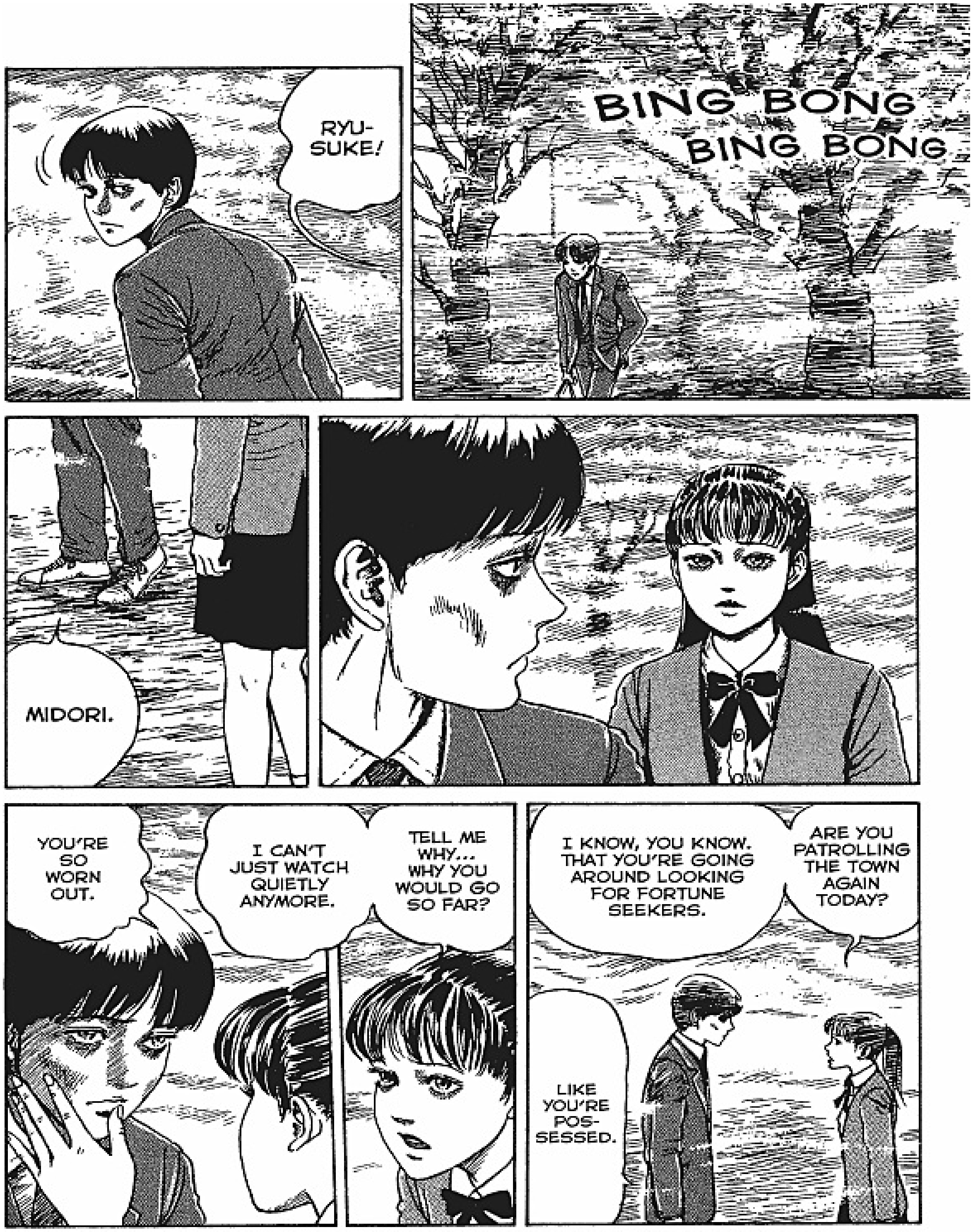

NO DOUBT, THIS WAS BECAUSE OF MY FEELINGS OF GUILT TOWARD THE WOMAN I DROVE TO SUICIDE EIGHT YEARS EARLIER. I BECAME OBSESSED WITH TELLING FORTUNES.
I WAS AS SINCERE AS POSSIBLE.
HOWEVER...
BEFORE LONG...
HEY THERE...
CROSSROADS FORTUNE?
...

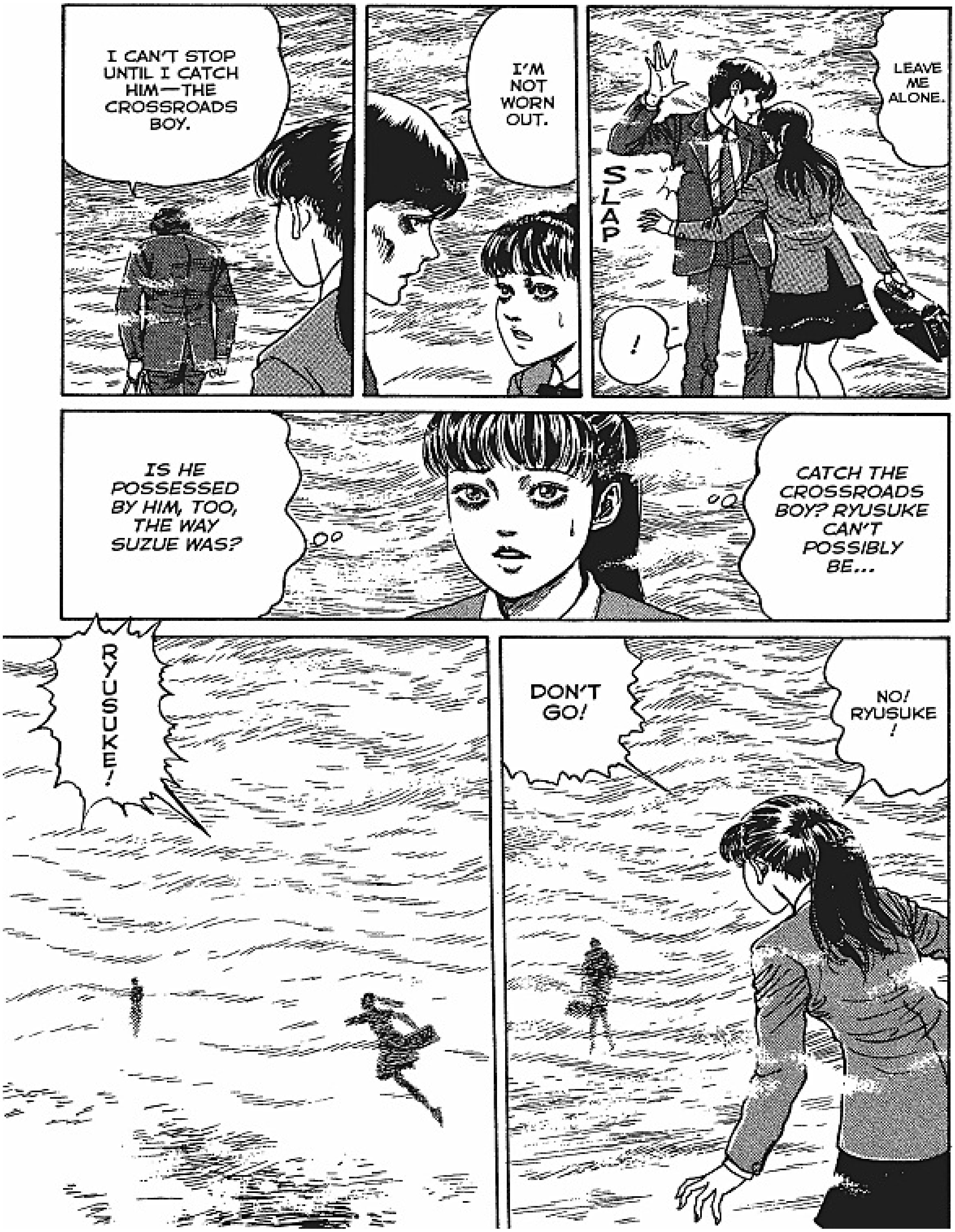

W-WHAT HAPPENED? YOU'RE COVERED IN BLOOD...

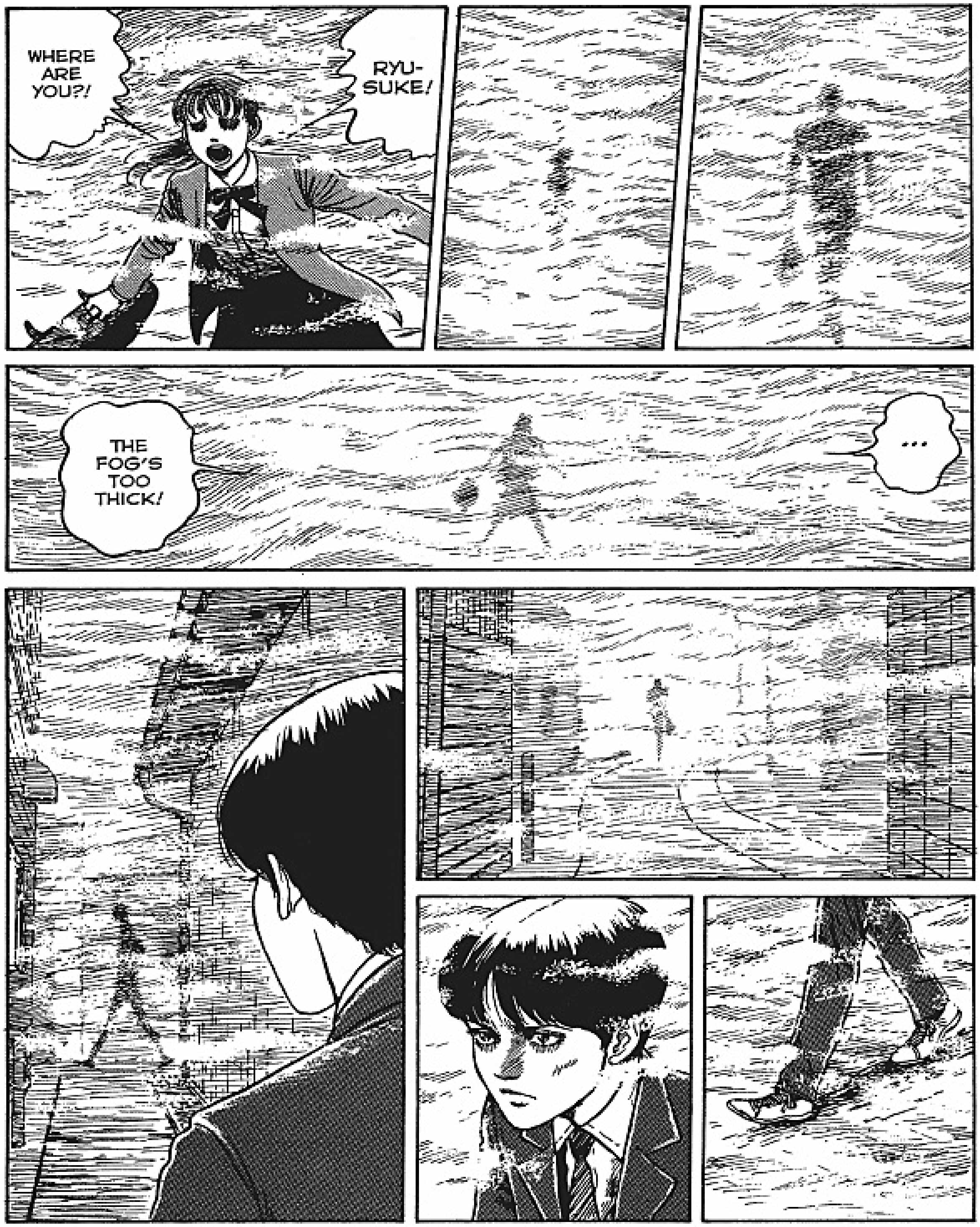

EXCUSE ME.
DO YOU THINK I'LL FIND LOVE?
...
YOU'LL FIND LOVE...
Y-YOU WILL...
...
R-RIDICULOUS...
THERE'S NO WAY SHE COULD STILL BE STANDING WITH HER THROAT SLICED OPEN LIKE THAT.
I-IT CAN'T BE.
S-SO THEN WHAT ON EARTH...

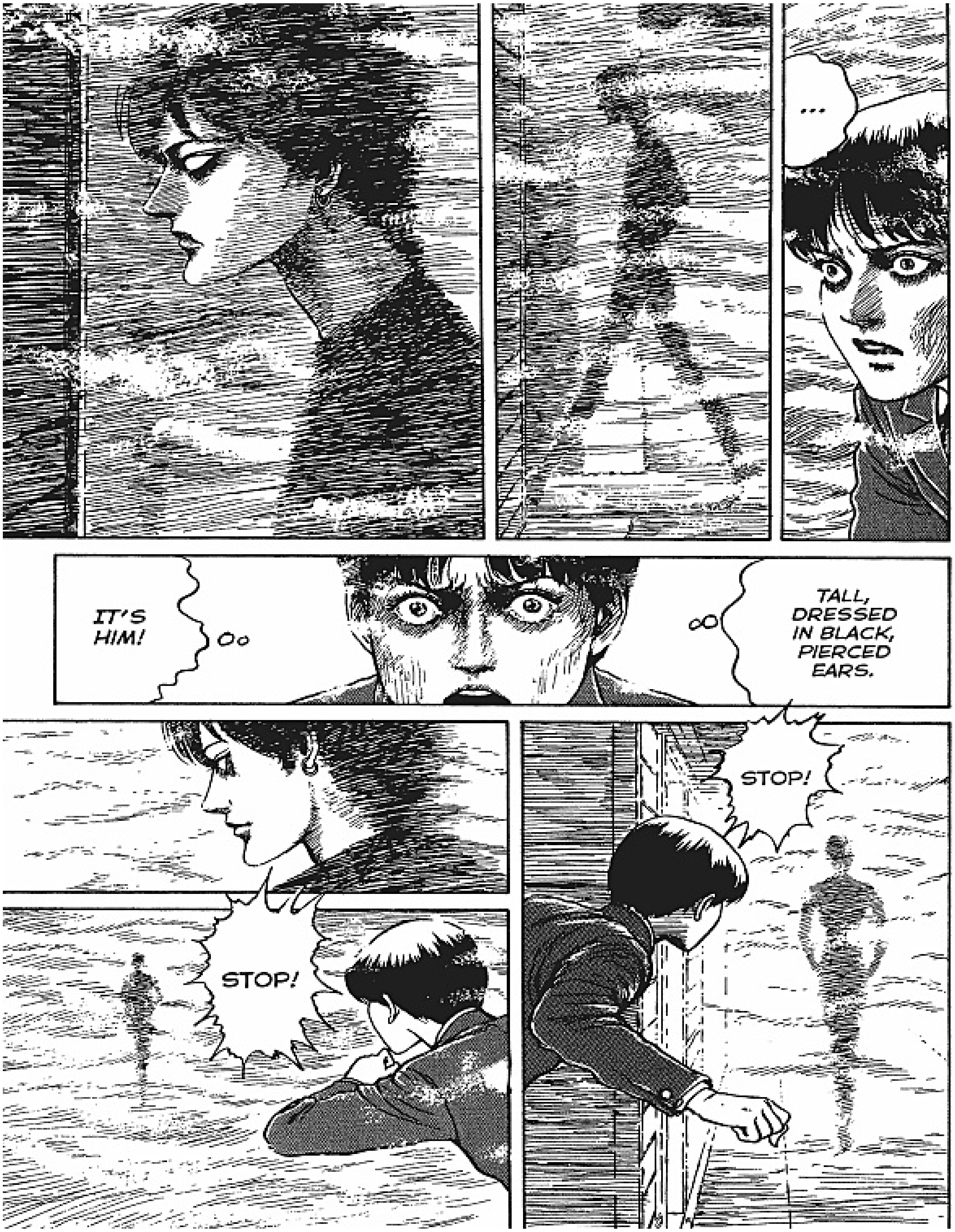

AFTER THAT, I SAW SEVERAL GIRLS COVERED IN BLOOD...
...AMONG THE PEOPLE I TOLD FORTUNES FOR.
...
I WAS SURE THEY WERE THE GIRLS WHO HAD KILLED THEMSELVES IN THE INTERSECTIONS.
AND THEN I GOT PROOF...

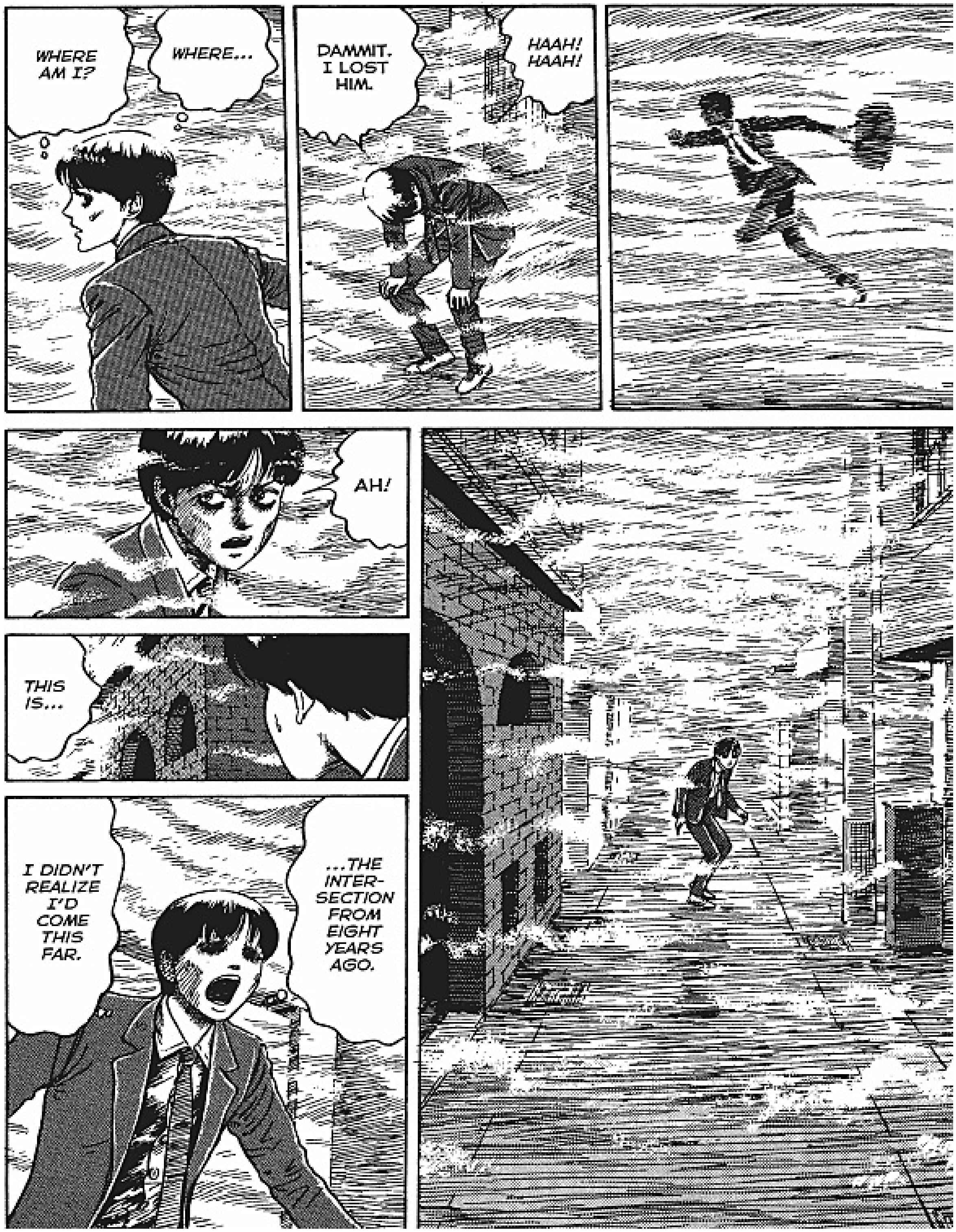

SUZUE...
I LOVE YOU!
I LOVE YOU SO MUCH I COULD DIE!
S-SUZUE... FORGIVE ME...
EVEN SO, I COULDN'T STOP PATROLLING INTERSECTIONS.

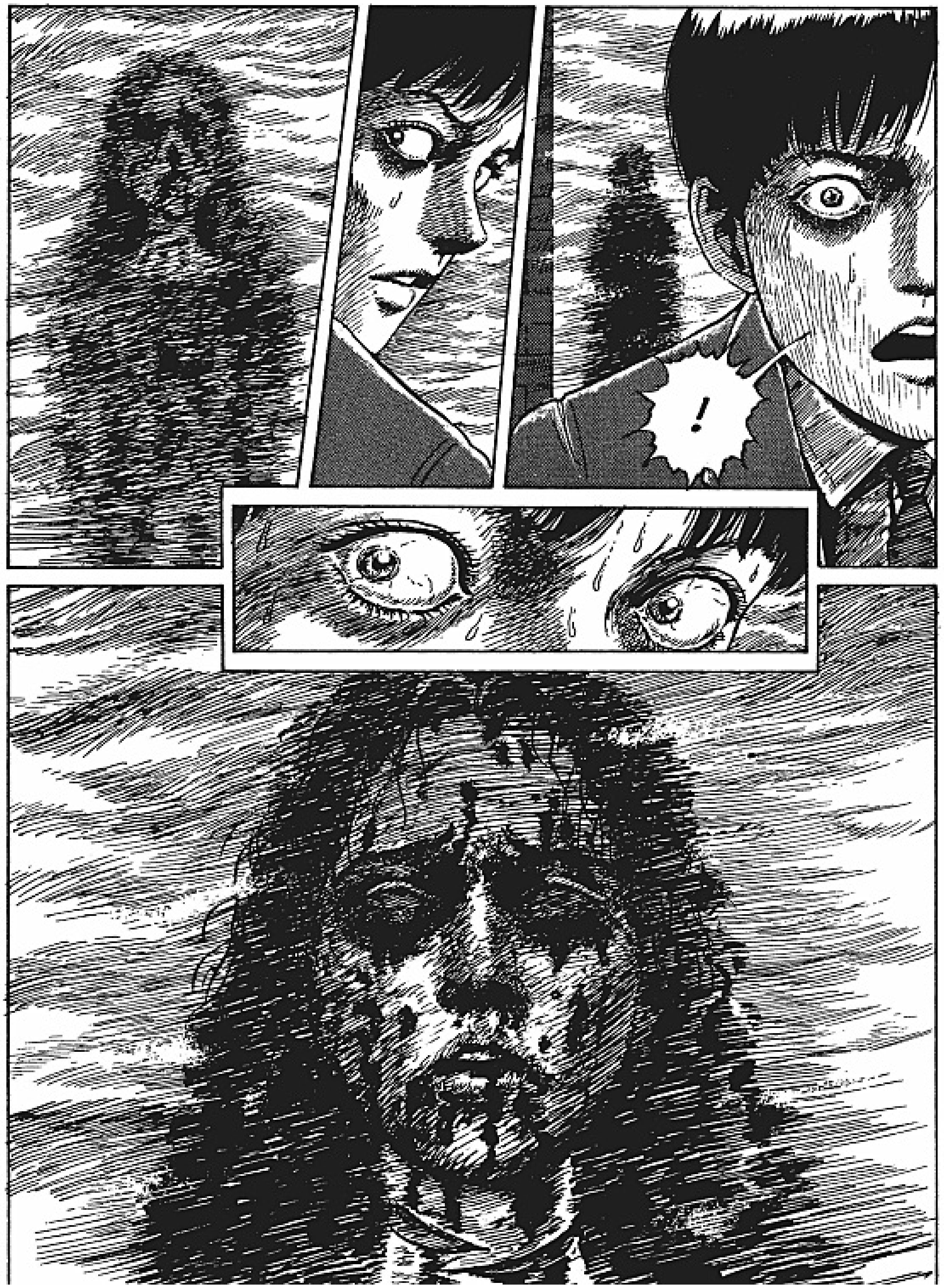

BING BONG
BING BONG
RYUSUKE!
MIDORI.
ARE YOU PATROLLING THE TOWN AGAIN TODAY?
I KNOW, YOU KNOW. THAT YOU'RE GOING AROUND LOOKING FOR FORTUNE SEEKERS.
LIKE YOU'RE POSSESSED.
TELL ME WHY... WHY YOU WOULD GO SO FAR?
I CAN'T JUST WATCH QUIETLY ANYMORE.
YOU'RE SO WORN OUT.

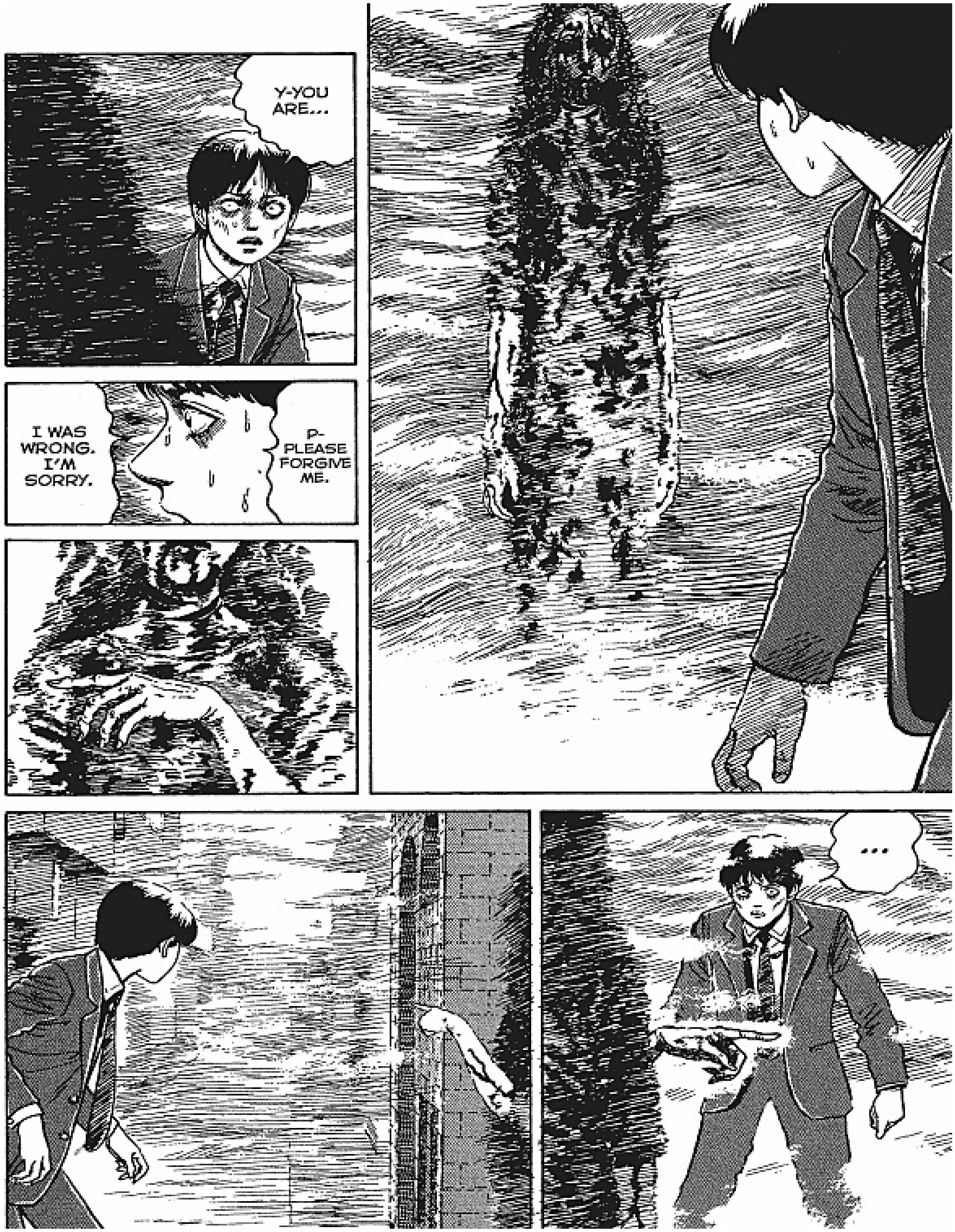

LEAVE ME ALONE.
SLAP
!
I'M NOT WORN OUT.
I CAN'T STOP UNTIL I CATCH HIM—THE CROSSROADS BOY.
CATCH THE CROSSROADS BOY? RYUSUKE CAN'T POSSIBLY BE...
IS HE POSSESSED BY HIM, TOO, THE WAY SUZUE WAS?
NO! RYUSUKE!
DON'T GO!
RYUSUKE!

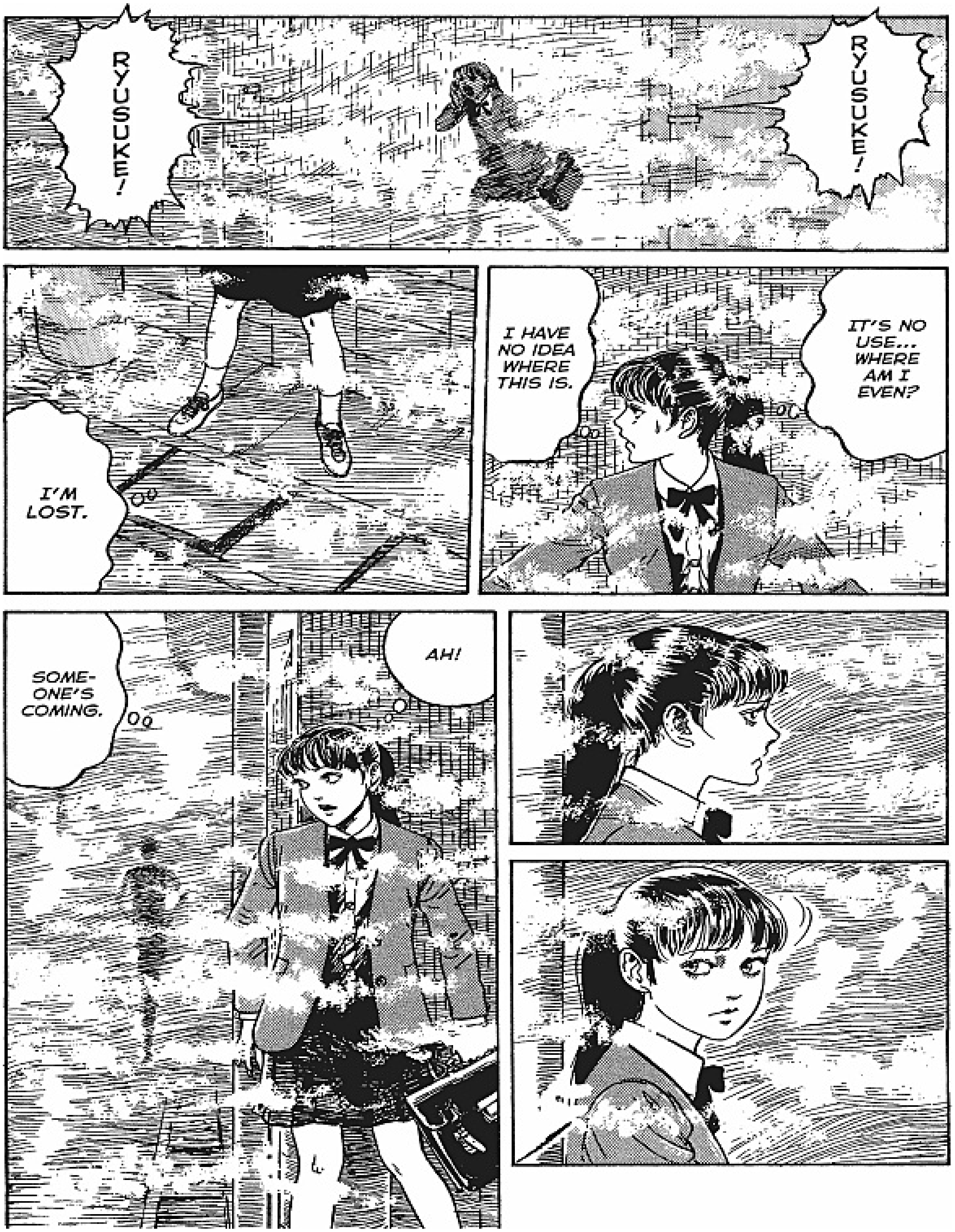

RYU-SUKE!
WHERE ARE YOU?!
...
THE FOG'S TOO THICK!

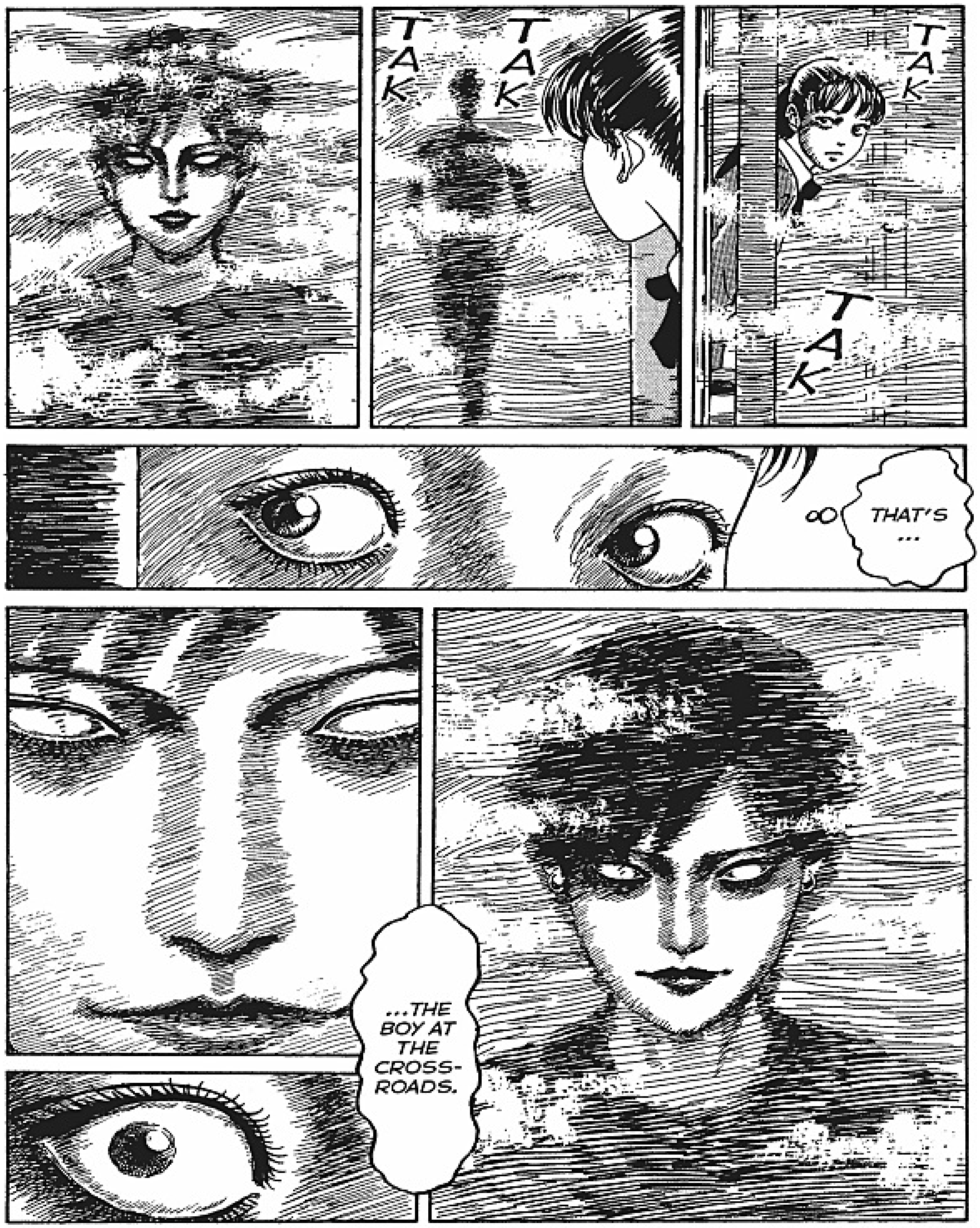

...
IT'S HIM!
TALL, DRESSED IN BLACK, PIERCED EARS.
STOP!
STOP!

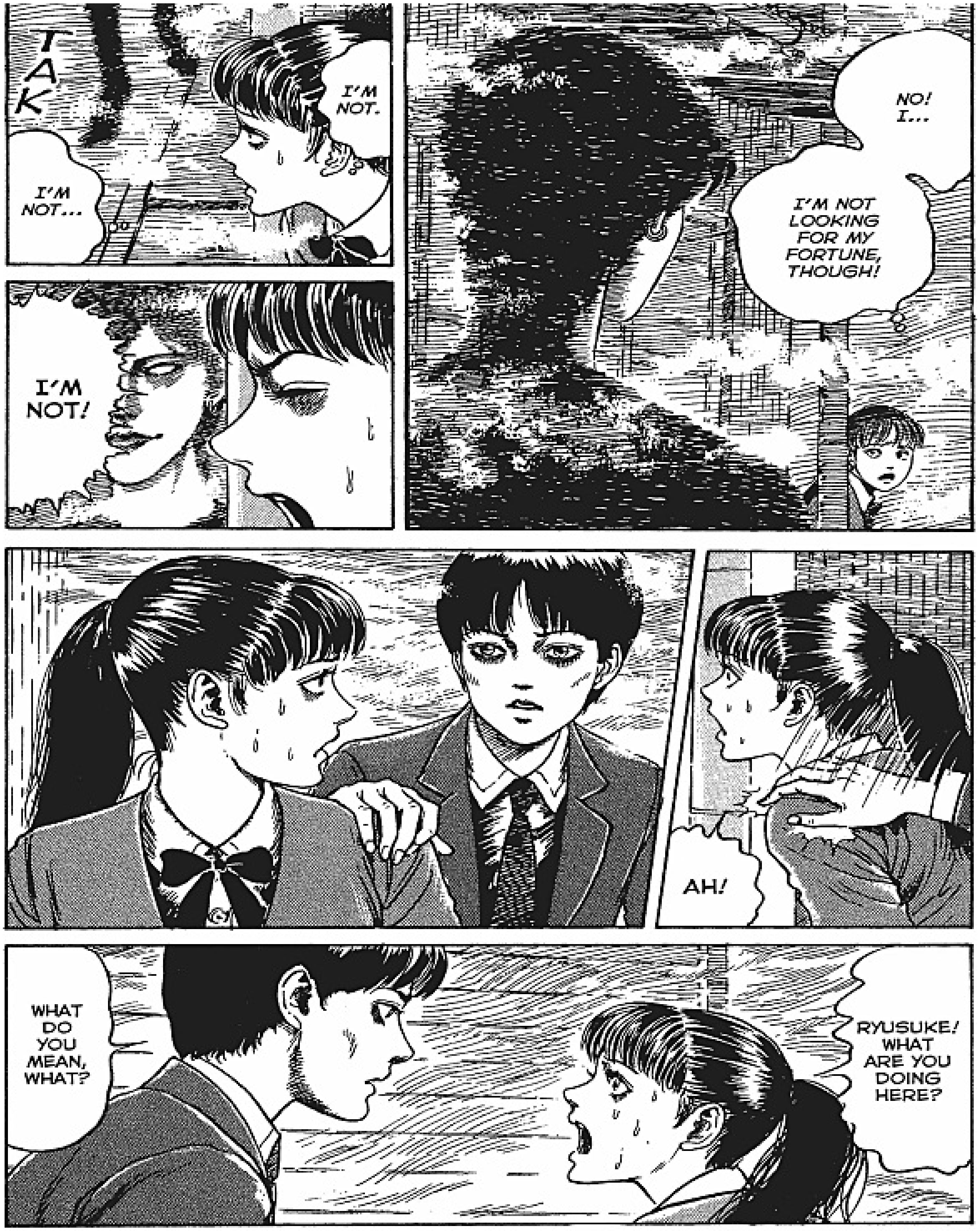

HAAH! HAAH!
DAMMIT. I LOST HIM.
WHERE...
WHERE AM I?
AH!
THIS IS...
...THE INTER-SECTION FROM EIGHT YEARS AGO.
I DIDN'T REALIZE I'D COME THIS FAR.

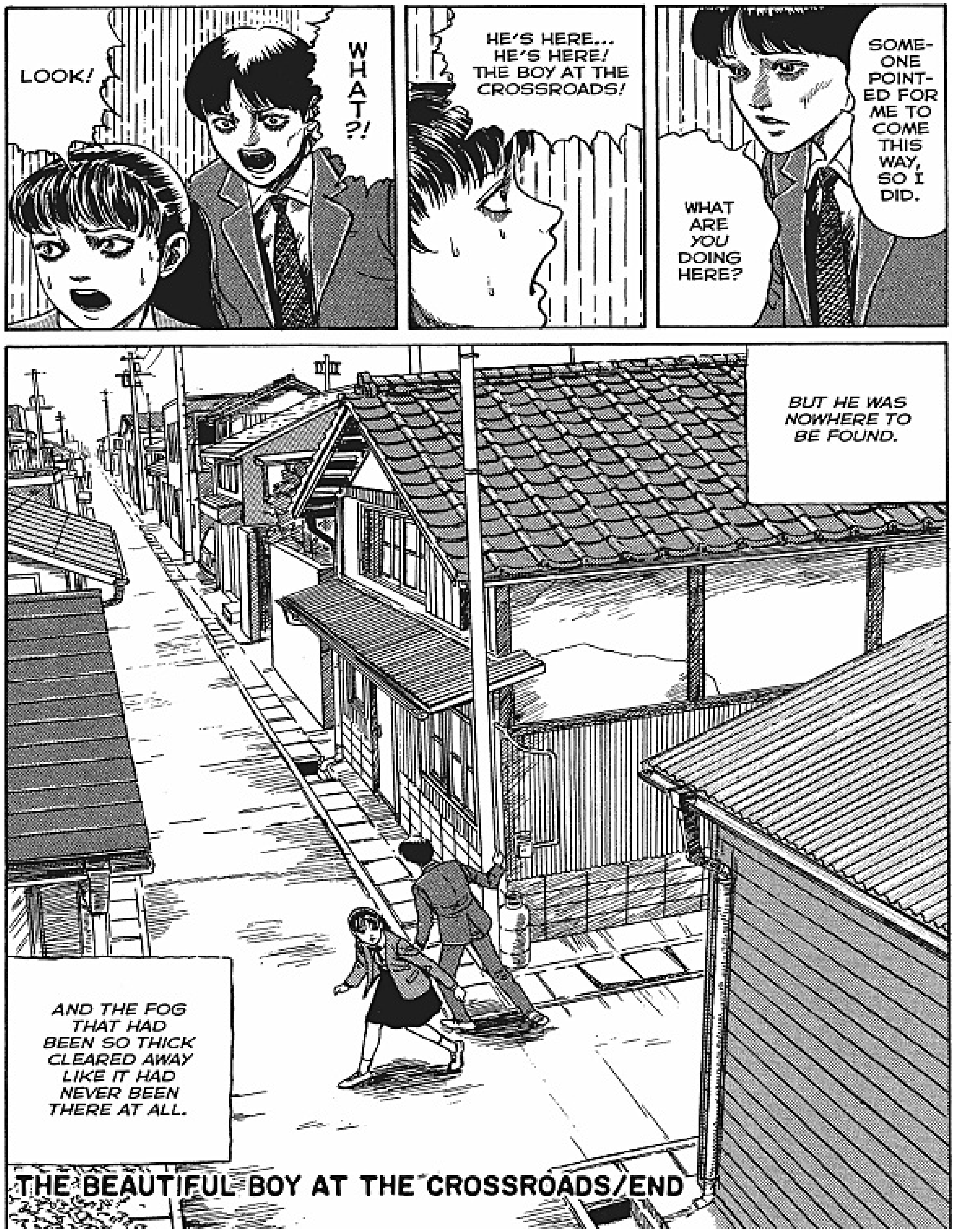


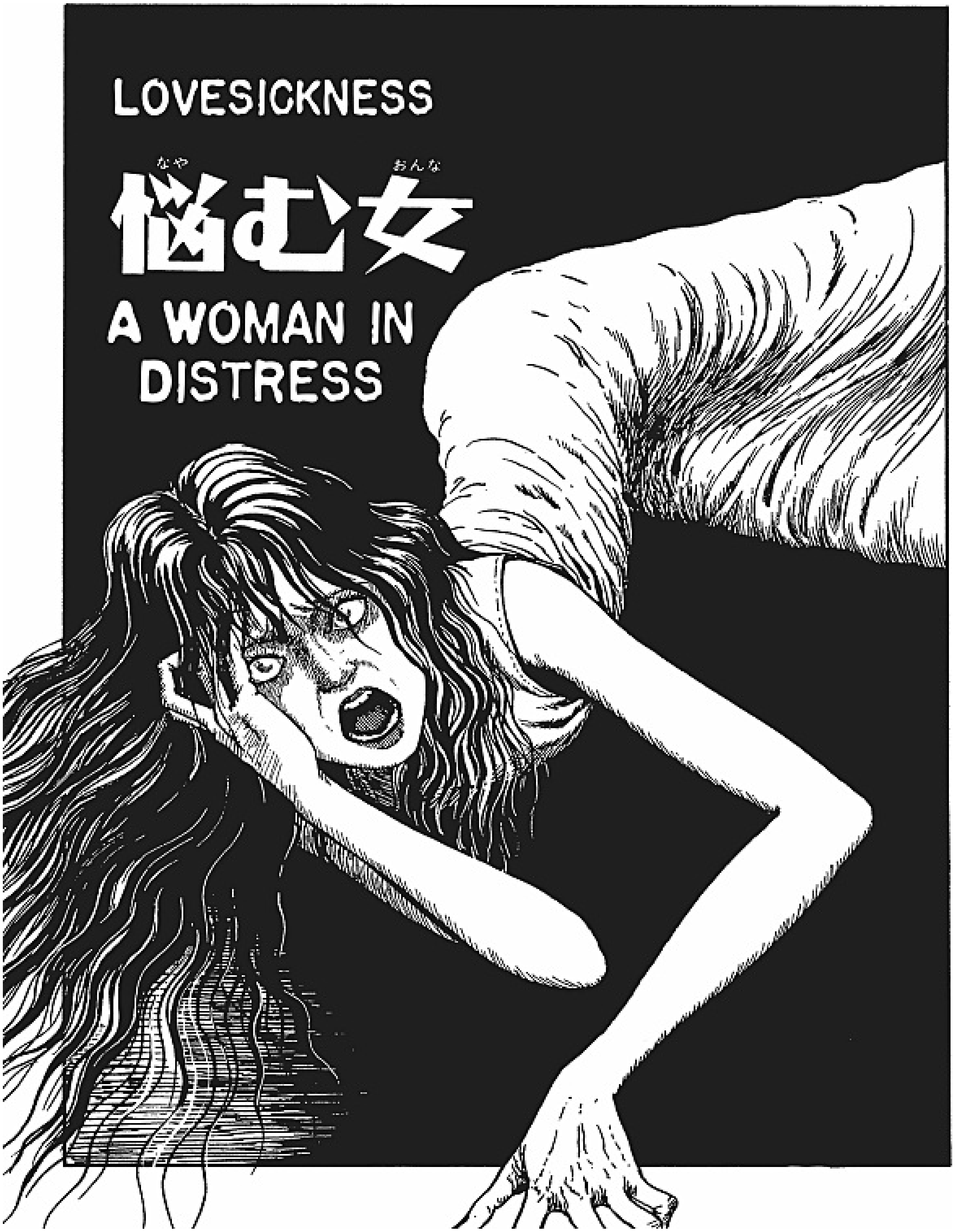

Y-YOU ARE...
I WAS WRONG. I'M SORRY.
P-PLEASE FORGIVE ME.
...


RYUSUKE!
RYUSUKE!
IT'S NO USE... WHERE AM I EVEN?
I HAVE NO IDEA WHERE THIS IS.
I'M LOST.
AH!
SOME-ONE'S COMING.


TAK
TAK
TAK
TAK
THAT'S ...
...THE BOY AT THE CROSSROADS.


TAK
I'M NOT.
I'M NOT...
NO! I...
I'M NOT LOOKING FOR MY FORTUNE, THOUGH!
I'M NOT!
AH!
RYUSUKE! WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?
WHAT DO YOU MEAN, WHAT?

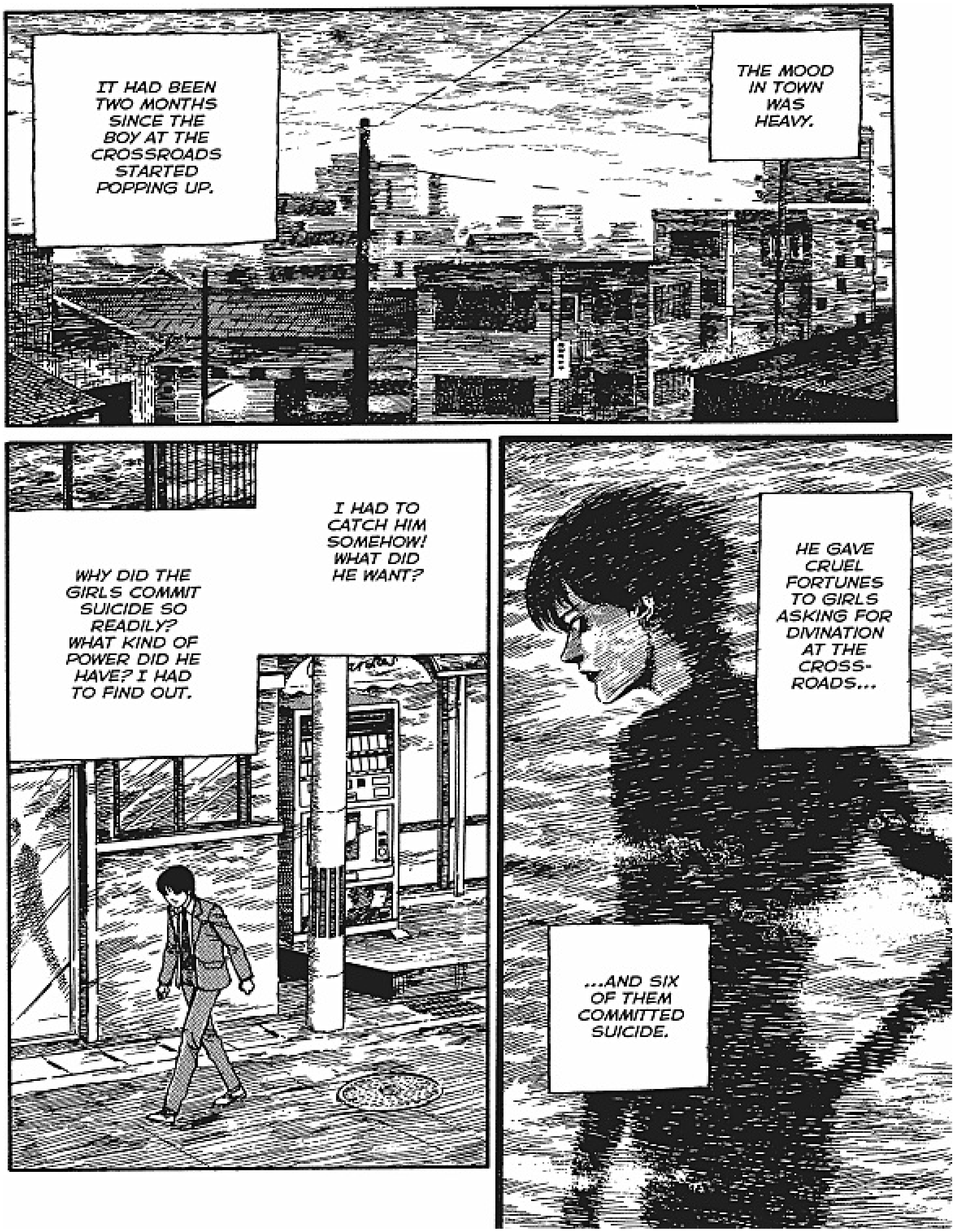

LOOK!
WHAT?!
HE'S HERE... HE'S HERE! THE BOY AT THE CROSSROADS!
WHAT ARE *YOU* DOING HERE?
SOMEONE POINTED FOR ME TO COME THIS WAY, SO I DID.
BUT HE WAS NOWHERE TO BE FOUND.
AND THE FOG THAT HAD BEEN SO THICK CLEARED AWAY LIKE IT HAD NEVER BEEN THERE AT ALL.
THE BEAUTIFUL BOY AT THE CROSSROADS/END

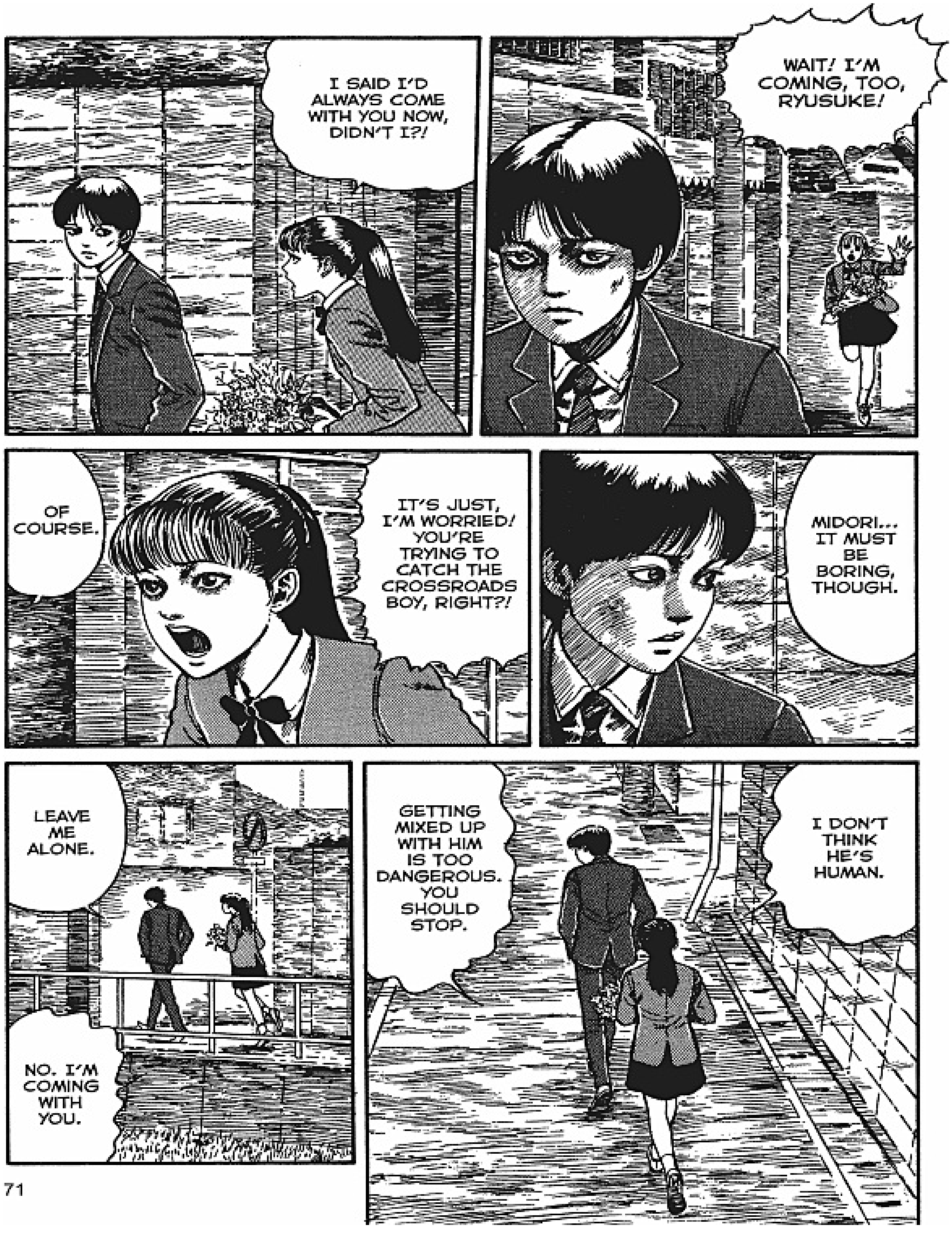


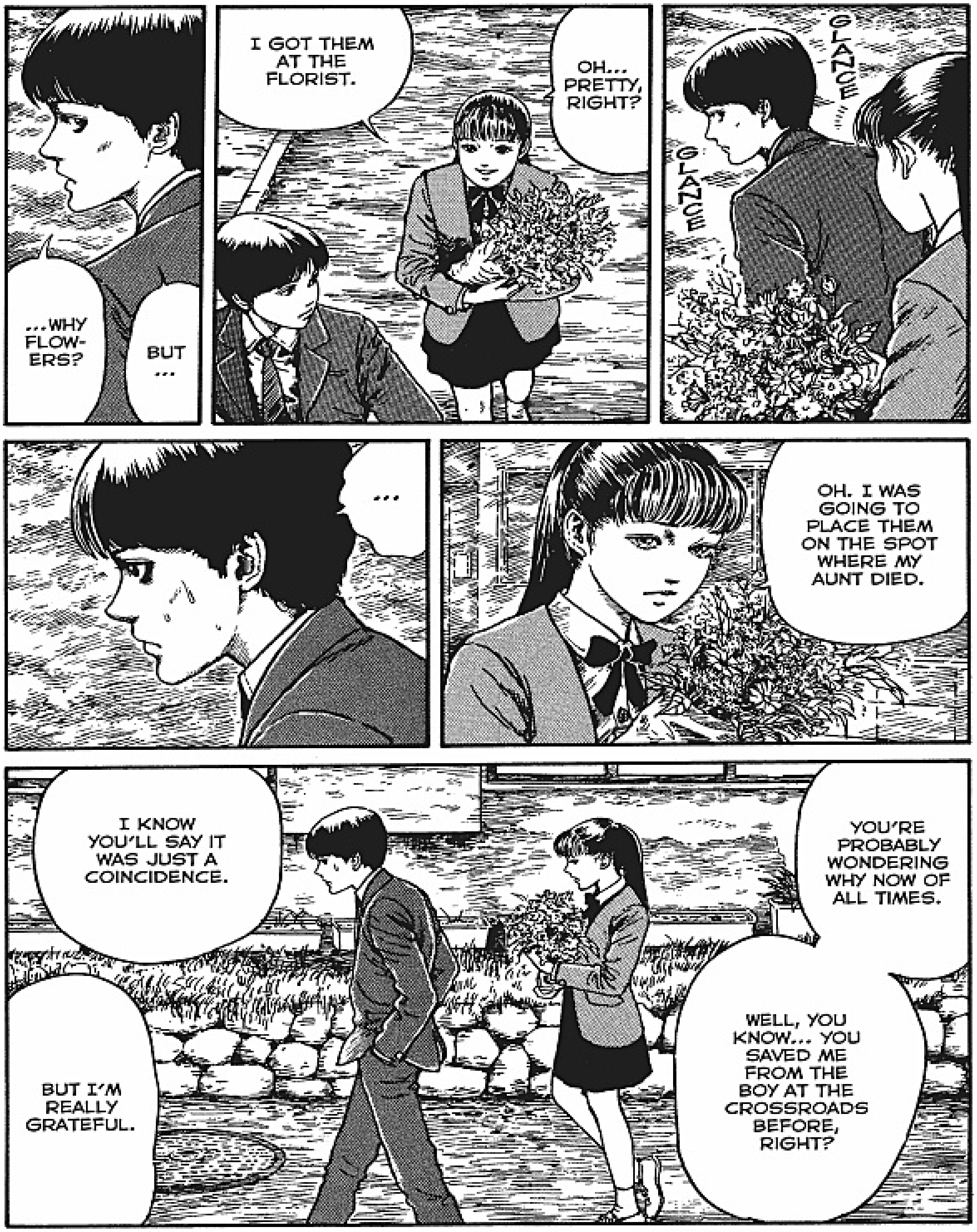
LOVESICKNESS

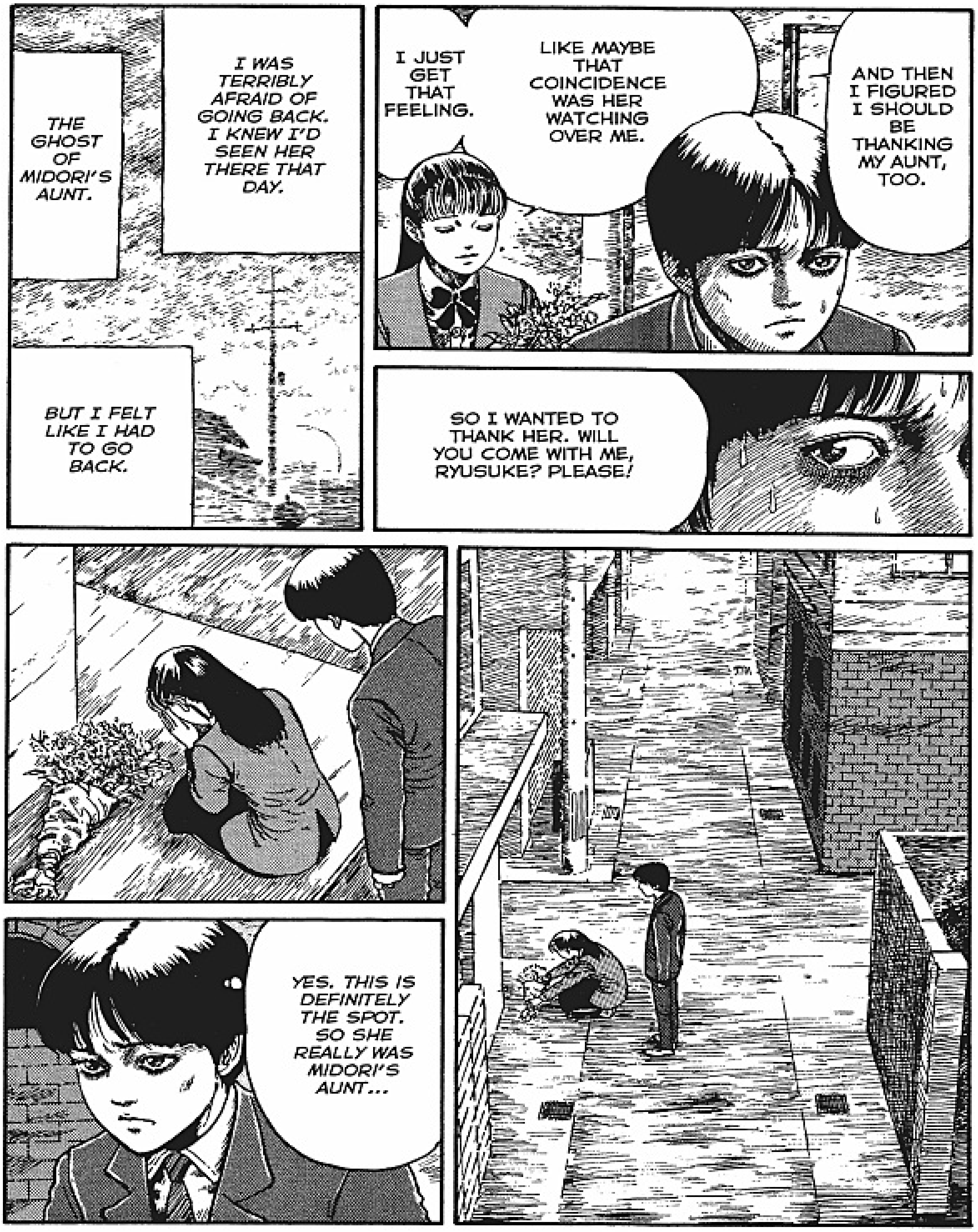
悩(なや)む女(おんな)

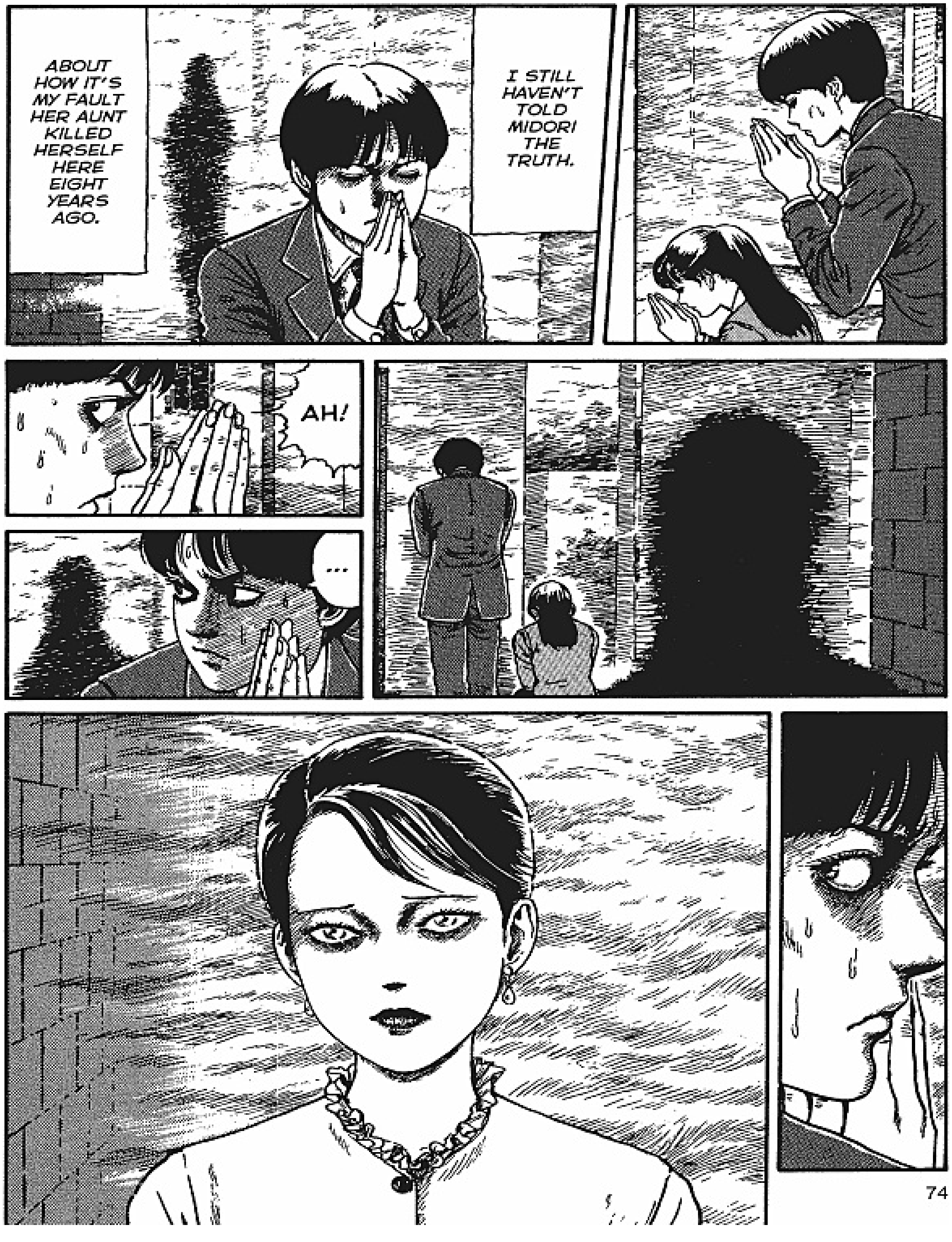
A WOMAN IN DISTRESS

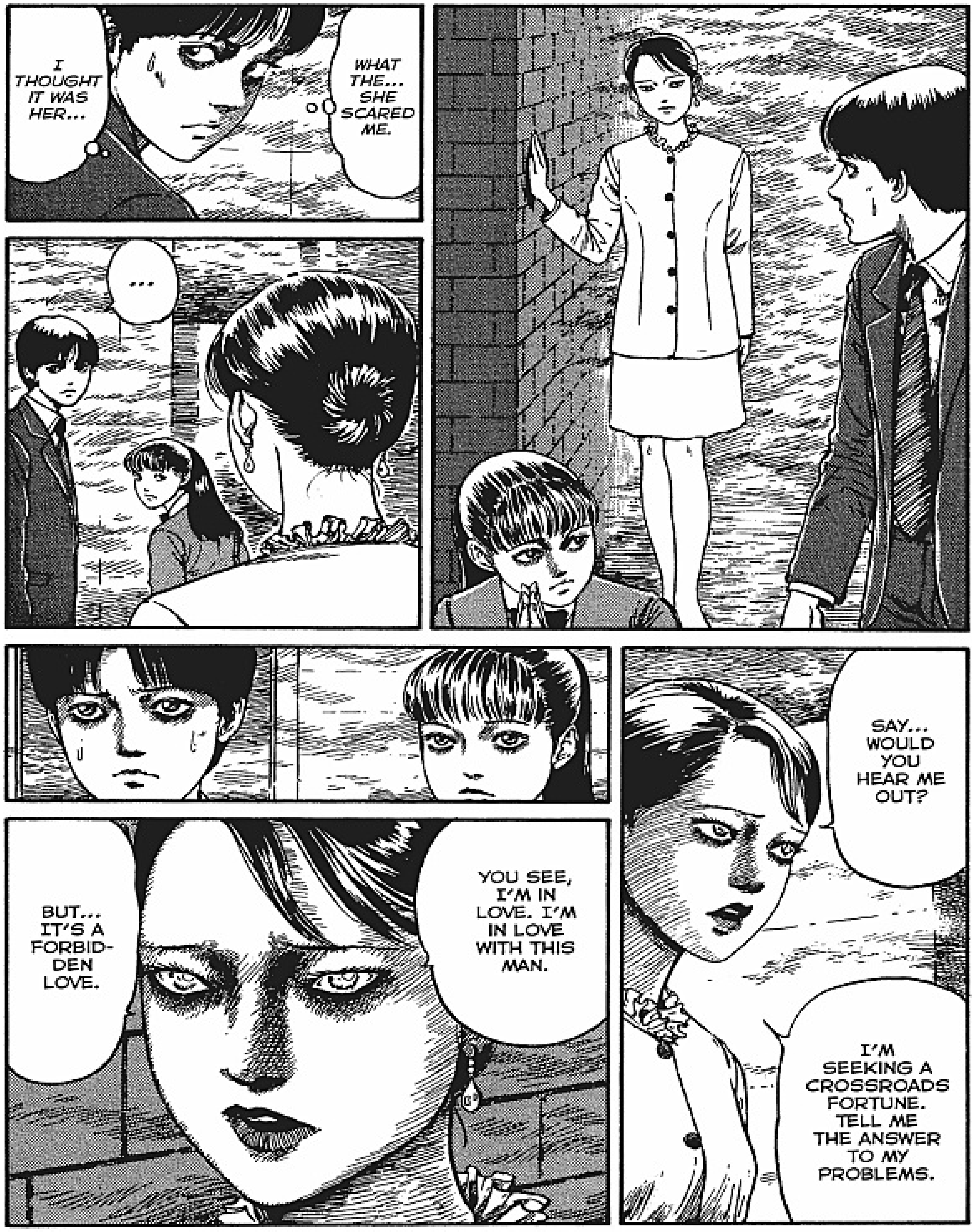

THE MOOD IN TOWN WAS HEAVY.
IT HAD BEEN TWO MONTHS SINCE THE BOY AT THE CROSSROADS STARTED POPPING UP.
HE GAVE CRUEL FORTUNES TO GIRLS ASKING FOR DIVINATION AT THE CROSSROADS...
...AND SIX OF THEM COMMITTED SUICIDE.
I HAD TO CATCH HIM SOMEHOW! WHAT DID HE WANT?
WHY DID THE GIRLS COMMIT SUICIDE SO READILY? WHAT KIND OF POWER DID HE HAVE? I HAD TO FIND OUT.

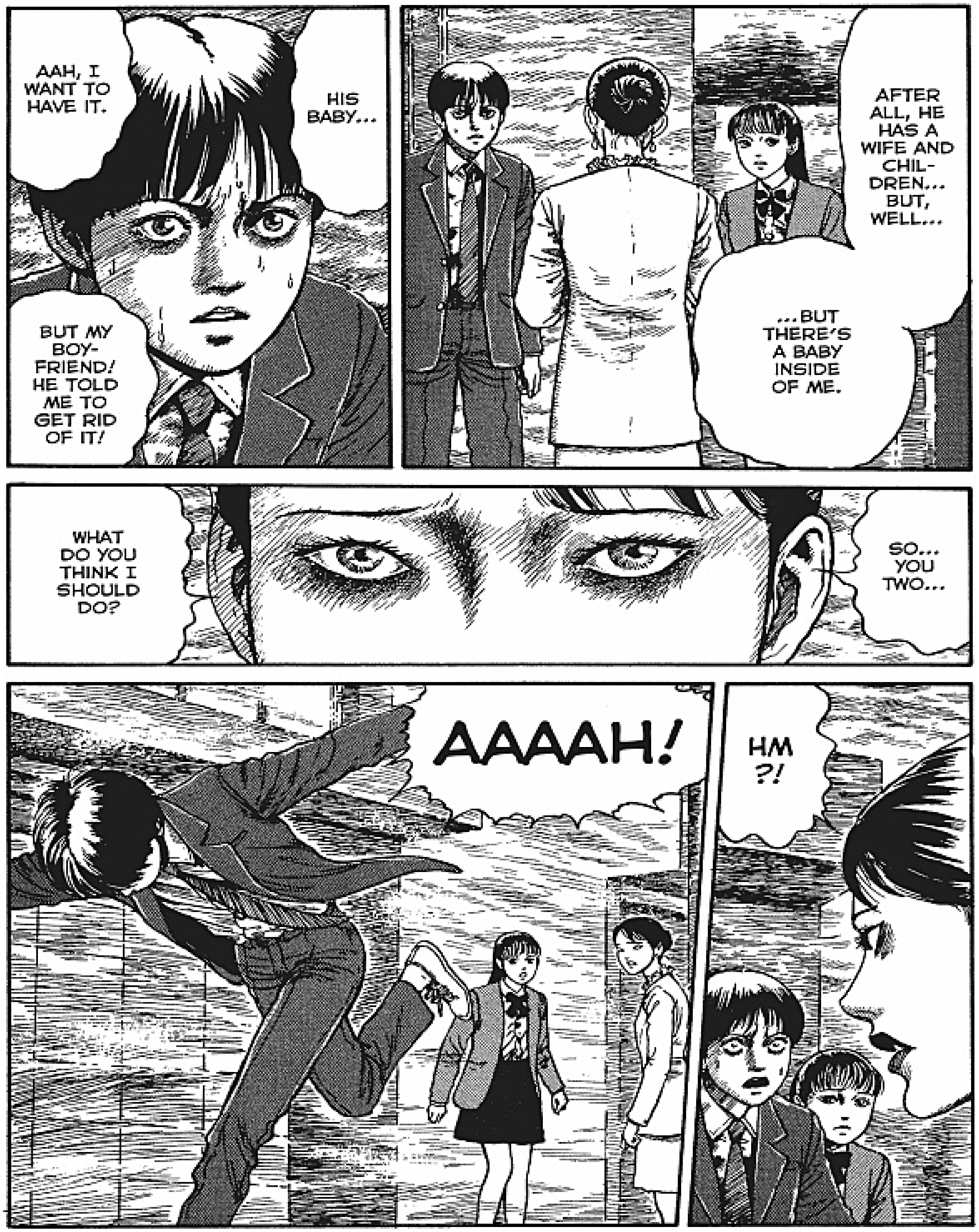

WAIT! I'M COMING, TOO, RYUSUKE!
I SAID I'D ALWAYS COME WITH YOU NOW, DIDN'T I?!
MIDORI... IT MUST BE BORING, THOUGH.
OF COURSE.
IT'S JUST, I'M WORRIED! YOU'RE TRYING TO CATCH THE CROSSROADS BOY, RIGHT?!
I DON'T THINK HE'S HUMAN.
GETTING MIXED UP WITH HIM IS TOO DANGEROUS. YOU SHOULD STOP.
LEAVE ME ALONE.
NO. I'M COMING WITH YOU.

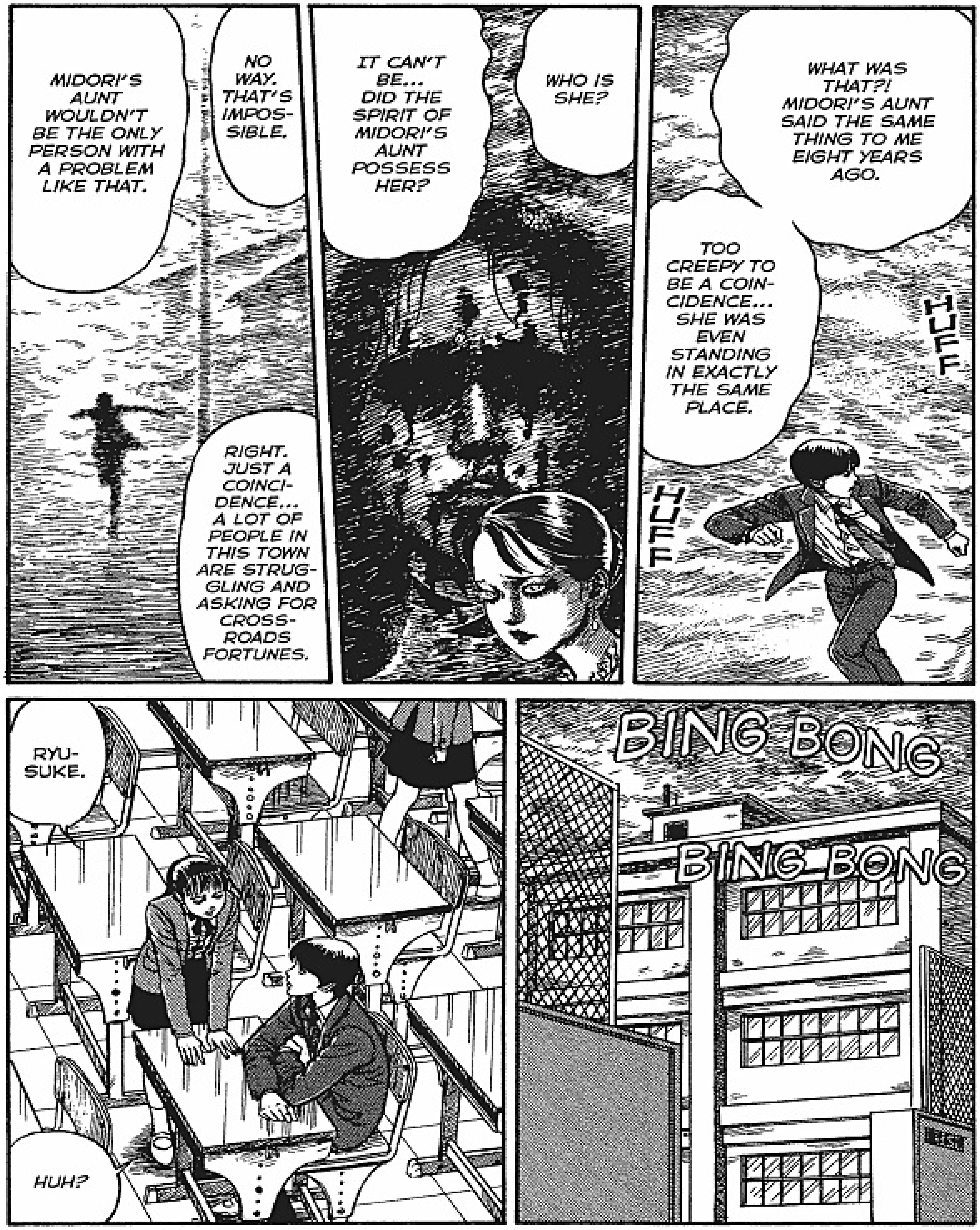

BUT ...
...WHY FLOWERS?
I GOT THEM AT THE FLORIST.
OH... PRETTY, RIGHT?
GLANCE GLANCE
...
OH. I WAS GOING TO PLACE THEM ON THE SPOT WHERE MY AUNT DIED.
YOU'RE PROBABLY WONDERING WHY NOW OF ALL TIMES.
WELL, YOU KNOW... YOU SAVED ME FROM THE BOY AT THE CROSSROADS BEFORE, RIGHT?
I KNOW YOU'LL SAY IT WAS JUST A COINCIDENCE.
BUT I'M REALLY GRATEFUL.

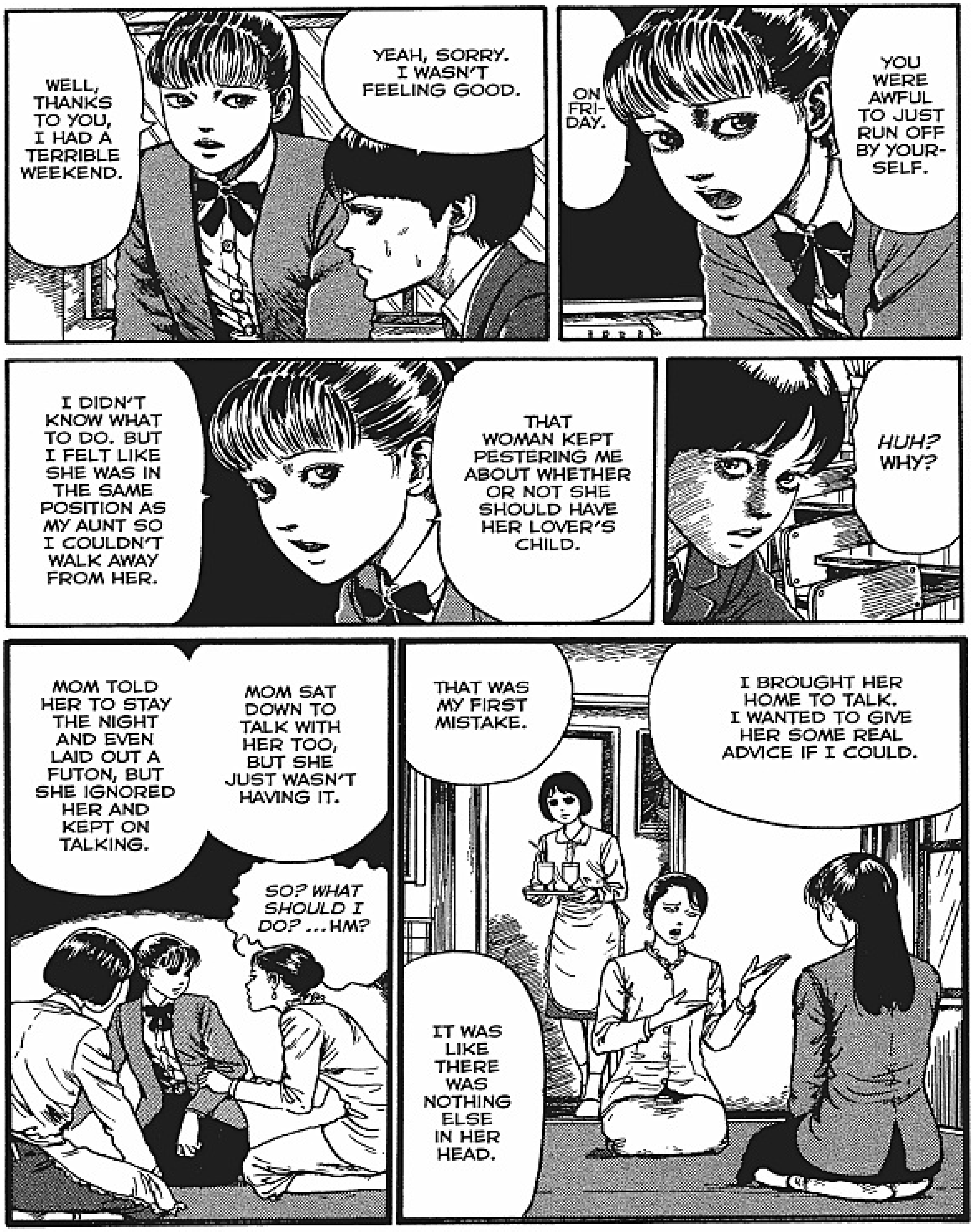

AND THEN I FIGURED I SHOULD BE THANKING MY AUNT, TOO.
LIKE MAYBE THAT COINCIDENCE WAS HER WATCHING OVER ME.
I JUST GET THAT FEELING.
SO I WANTED TO THANK HER. WILL YOU COME WITH ME, RYUSUKE? PLEASE!
I WAS TERRIBLY AFRAID OF GOING BACK. I KNEW I'D SEEN HER THERE THAT DAY.
THE GHOST OF MIDORI'S AUNT.
BUT I FELT LIKE I HAD TO GO BACK.
YES. THIS IS DEFINITELY THE SPOT. SO SHE REALLY WAS MIDORI'S AUNT...

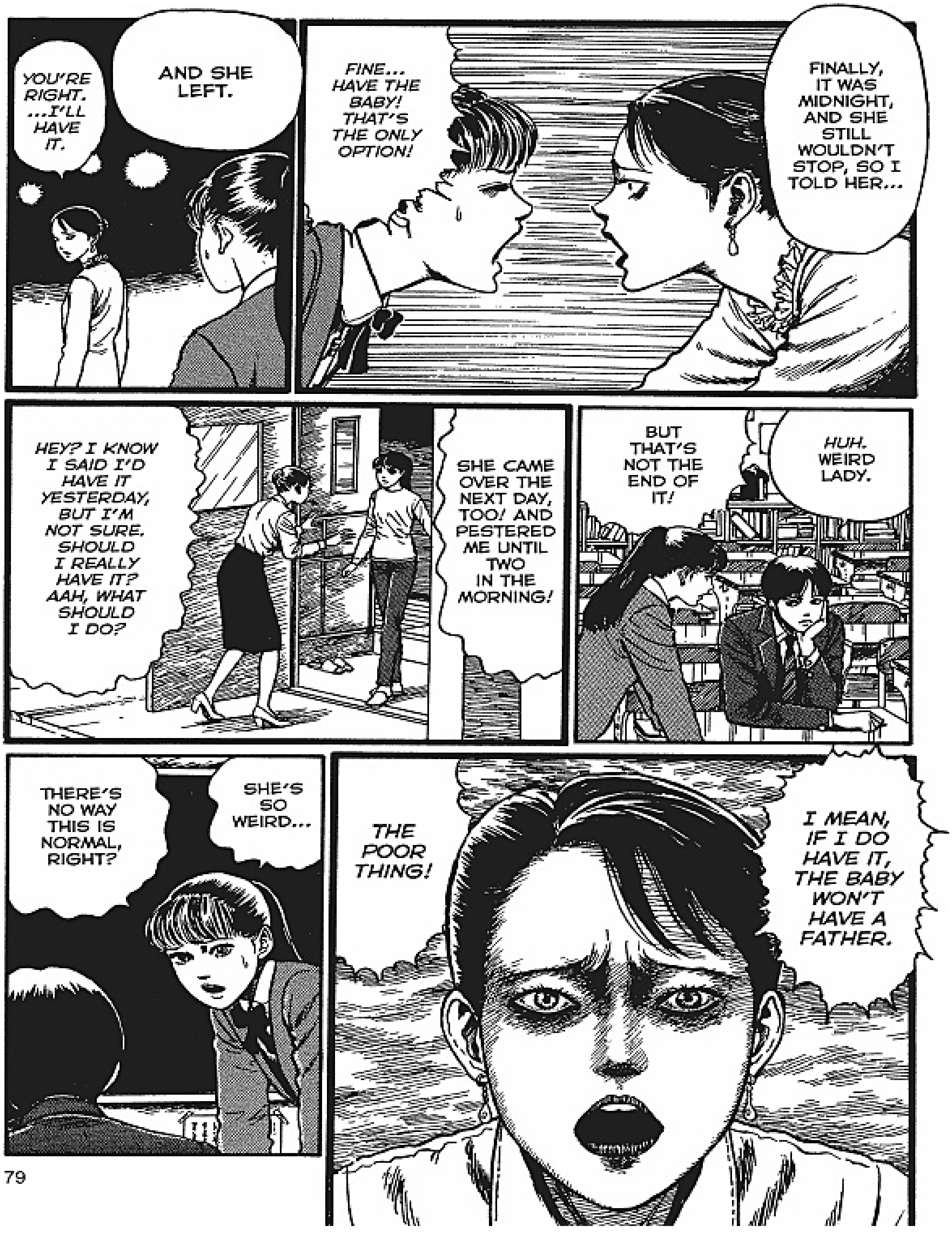

I STILL HAVEN'T TOLD MIDORI THE TRUTH.
ABOUT HOW IT'S MY FAULT HER AUNT KILLED HERSELF HERE EIGHT YEARS AGO.
AH!
...

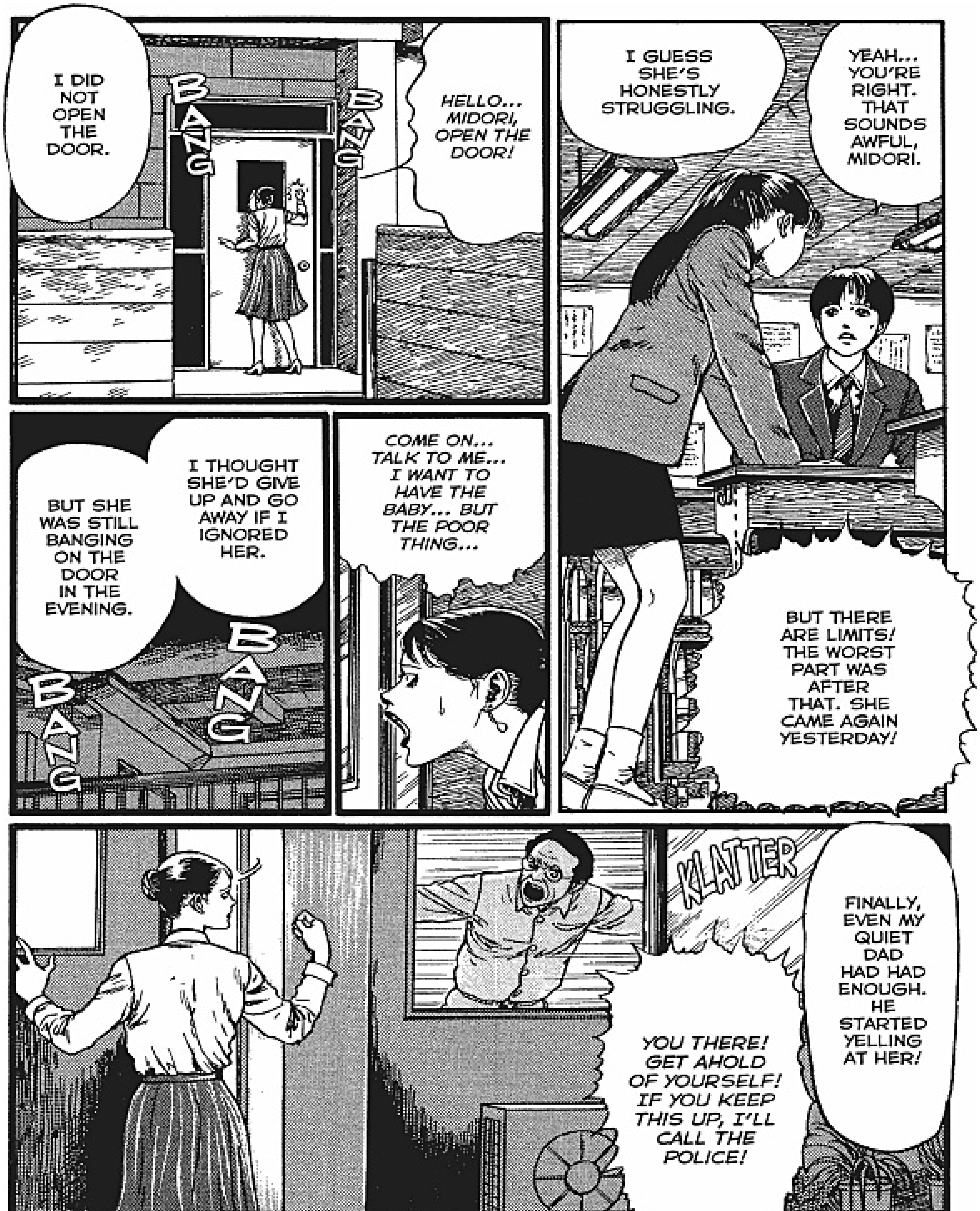

WHAT THE... SHE SCARED ME.
I THOUGHT IT WAS HER...
...
SAY... WOULD YOU HEAR ME OUT?
I'M SEEKING A CROSSROADS FORTUNE. TELL ME THE ANSWER TO MY PROBLEMS.
YOU SEE, I'M IN LOVE. I'M IN LOVE WITH THIS MAN.
BUT... IT'S A FORBIDDEN LOVE.

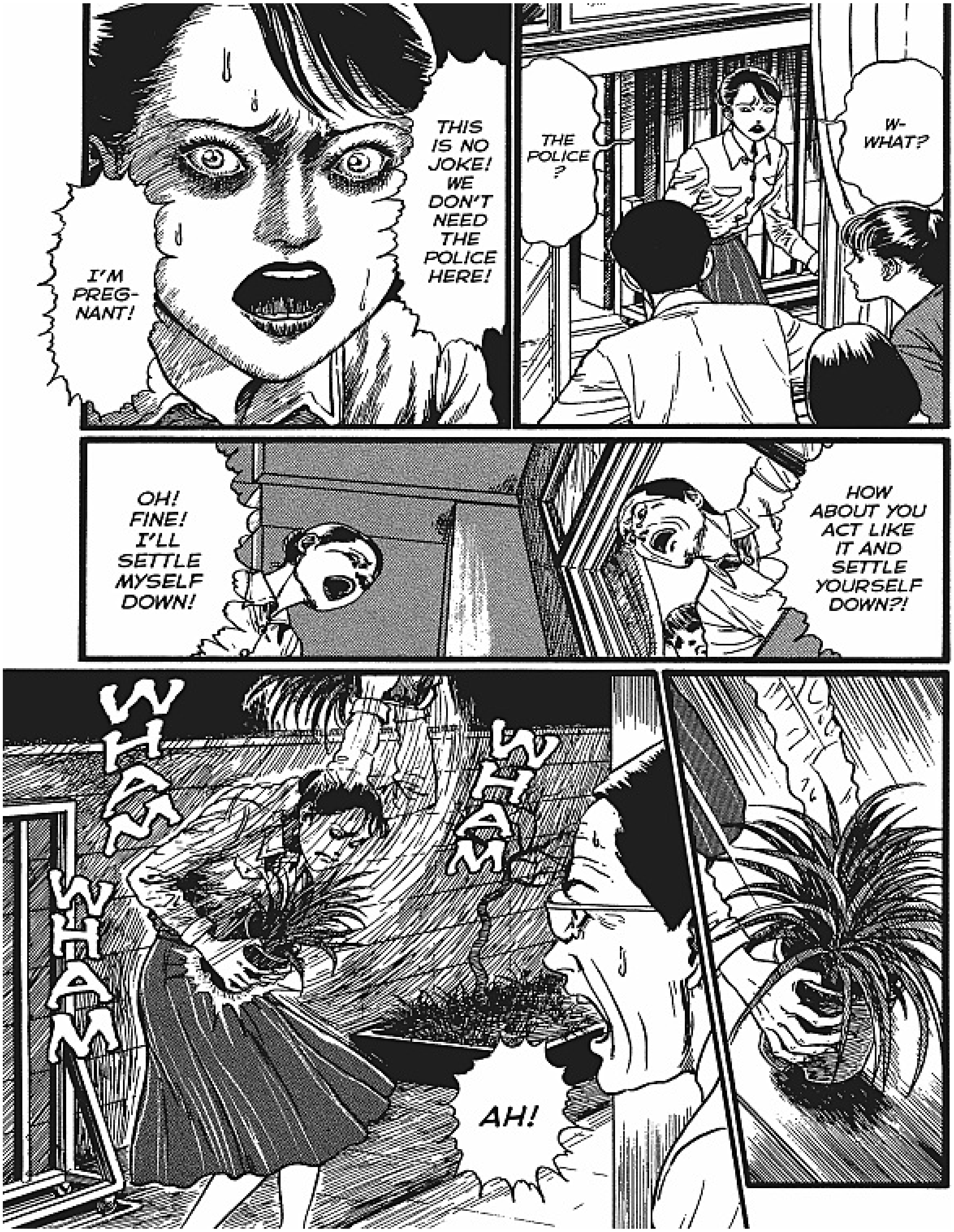

AFTER ALL, HE HAS A WIFE AND CHILDREN... BUT, WELL...
...BUT THERE'S A BABY INSIDE OF ME.
HIS BABY...
AAH, I WANT TO HAVE IT.
BUT MY BOYFRIEND! HE TOLD ME TO GET RID OF IT!
SO... YOU TWO...
WHAT DO YOU THINK I SHOULD DO?
HM ?!
AAAAH!

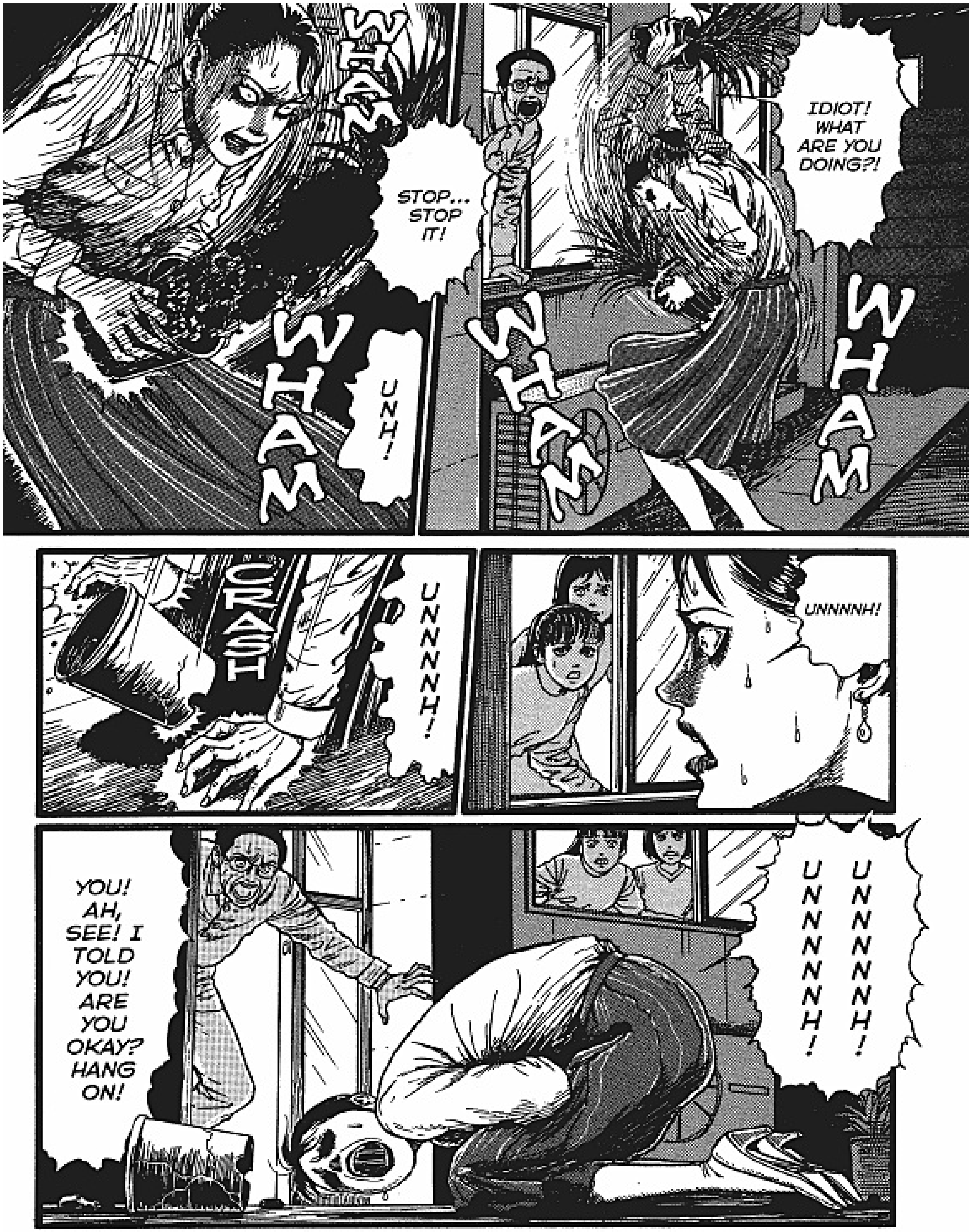

WHAT WAS THAT?! MIDORI'S AUNT SAID THE SAME THING TO ME EIGHT YEARS AGO.
TOO CREEPY TO BE A COINCIDENCE... SHE WAS EVEN STANDING IN EXACTLY THE SAME PLACE.
HUFF
HUFF
WHO IS SHE?
IT CAN'T BE... DID THE SPIRIT OF MIDORI'S AUNT POSSESS HER?
NO WAY. THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE.
MIDORI'S AUNT WOULDN'T BE THE ONLY PERSON WITH A PROBLEM LIKE THAT.
RIGHT. JUST A COINCIDENCE... A LOT OF PEOPLE IN THIS TOWN ARE STRUGGLING AND ASKING FOR CROSSROADS FORTUNES.
BING BONG
BING BONG
RYUSUKE.
HUH?

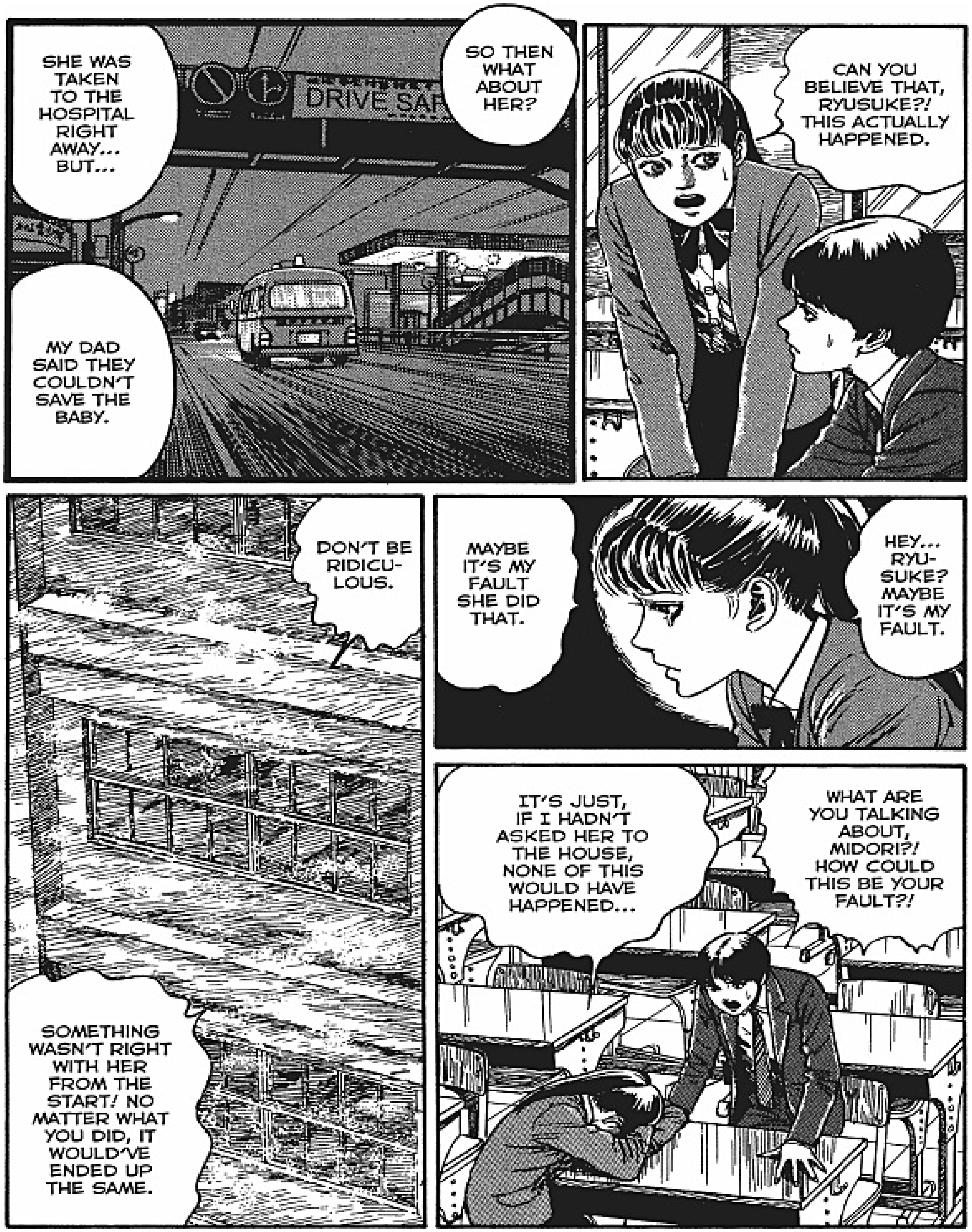

YOU WERE AWFUL TO JUST RUN OFF BY YOURSELF.
ON FRIDAY.
YEAH, SORRY. I WASN'T FEELING GOOD.
WELL, THANKS TO YOU, I HAD A TERRIBLE WEEKEND.
HUH? WHY?
THAT WOMAN KEPT PESTERING ME ABOUT WHETHER OR NOT SHE SHOULD HAVE HER LOVER'S CHILD.
I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO DO. BUT I FELT LIKE SHE WAS IN THE SAME POSITION AS MY AUNT SO I COULDN'T WALK AWAY FROM HER.
I BROUGHT HER HOME TO TALK. I WANTED TO GIVE HER SOME REAL ADVICE IF I COULD.
THAT WAS MY FIRST MISTAKE.
IT WAS LIKE THERE WAS NOTHING ELSE IN HER HEAD.
MOM SAT DOWN TO TALK WITH HER TOO, BUT SHE JUST WASN'T HAVING IT.
MOM TOLD HER TO STAY THE NIGHT AND EVEN LAID OUT A FUTON, BUT SHE IGNORED HER AND KEPT ON TALKING.
SO? WHAT SHOULD I DO? ...HM?

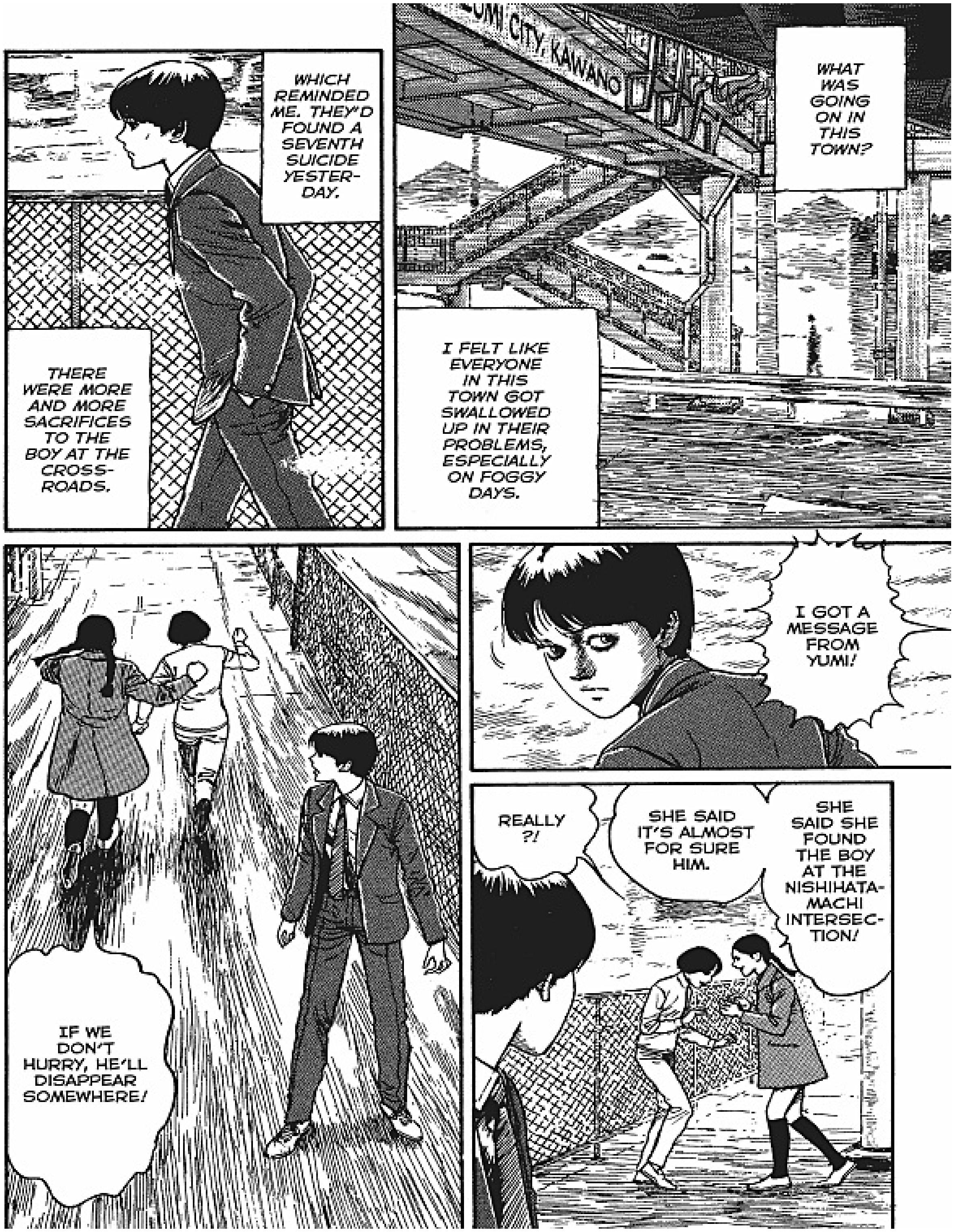

FINALLY, IT WAS MIDNIGHT, AND SHE STILL WOULDN'T STOP, SO I TOLD HER...
FINE... HAVE THE BABY! THAT'S THE ONLY OPTION!
AND SHE LEFT.
YOU'RE RIGHT. ...I'LL HAVE IT.
HUH. WEIRD LADY.
BUT THAT'S NOT THE END OF IT!
SHE CAME OVER THE NEXT DAY, TOO! AND PESTERED ME UNTIL TWO IN THE MORNING!
HEY? I KNOW I SAID I'D HAVE IT YESTERDAY, BUT I'M NOT SURE. SHOULD I REALLY HAVE IT? AAH, WHAT SHOULD I DO?
I MEAN, IF I DO HAVE IT, THE BABY WON'T HAVE A FATHER.
THE POOR THING!
SHE'S SO WEIRD...
THERE'S NO WAY THIS IS NORMAL, RIGHT?

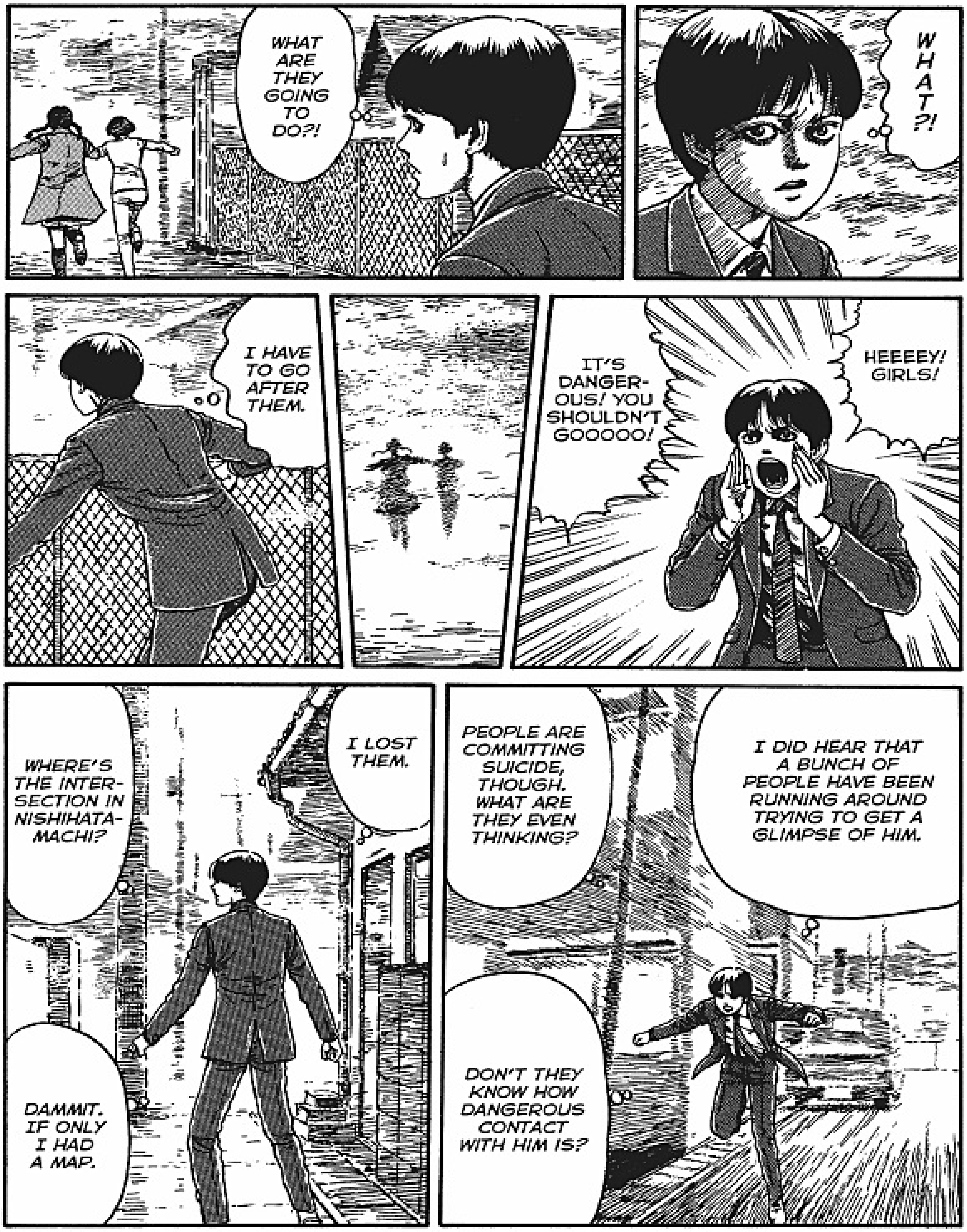

BANG
BANG
HELLO... MIDORI, OPEN THE DOOR!
I DID NOT OPEN THE DOOR.
I THOUGHT SHE'D GIVE UP AND GO AWAY IF I IGNORED HER.
BUT SHE WAS STILL BANGING ON THE DOOR IN THE EVENING.
BANG
BANG
COME ON... TALK TO ME... I WANT TO HAVE THE BABY... BUT THE POOR THING...
YEAH... YOU'RE RIGHT. THAT SOUNDS AWFUL, MIDORI.
I GUESS SHE'S HONESTLY STRUGGLING.
BUT THERE ARE LIMITS! THE WORST PART WAS AFTER THAT. SHE CAME AGAIN YESTERDAY!
KLATTER
FINALLY, EVEN MY QUIET DAD HAD HAD ENOUGH. HE STARTED YELLING AT HER!
YOU THERE! GET AHOLD OF YOURSELF! IF YOU KEEP THIS UP, I'LL CALL THE POLICE!

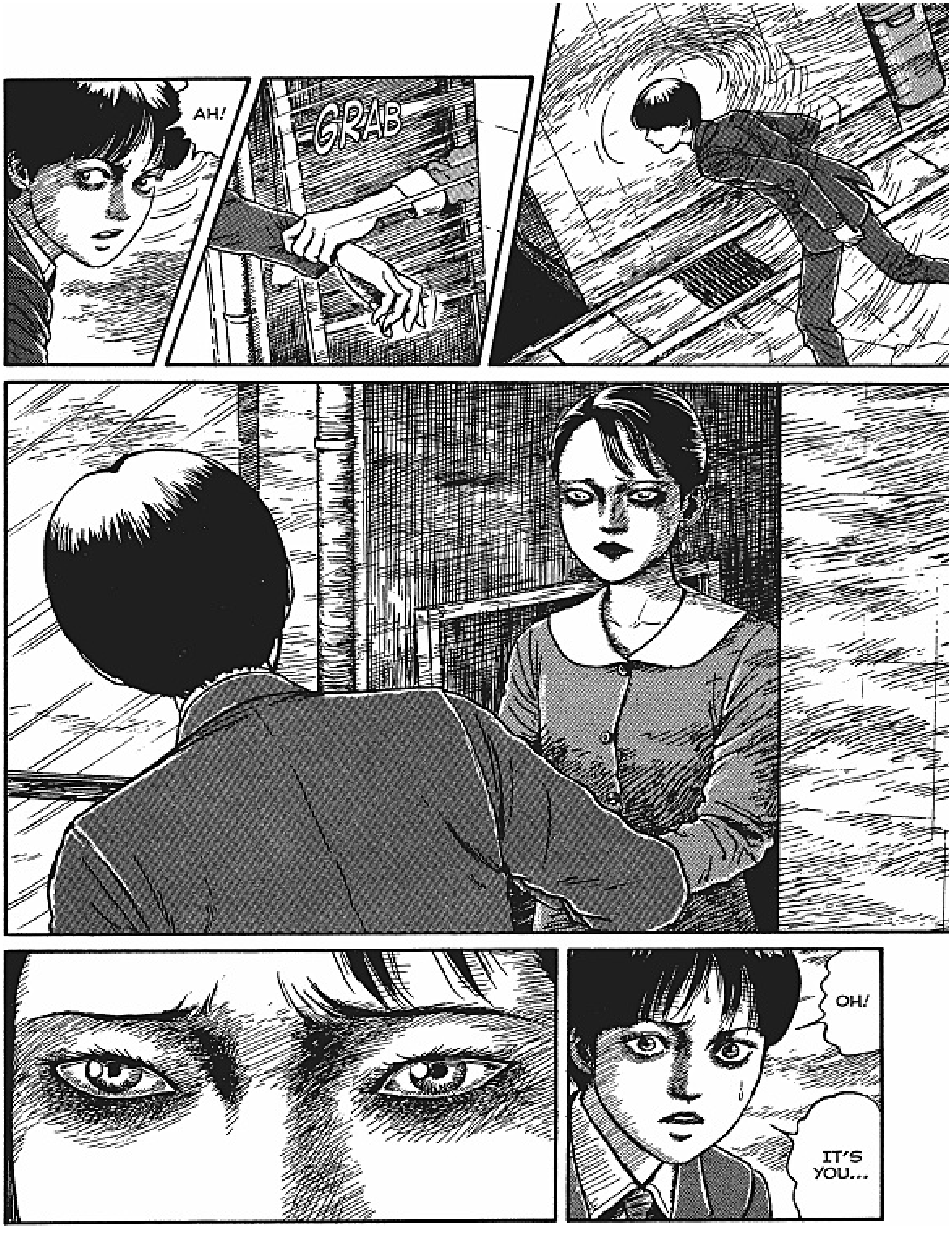

THIS IS NO JOKE! WE DON'T NEED THE POLICE HERE!
I'M PREGNANT!
W-WHAT?
THE POLICE?
HOW ABOUT YOU ACT LIKE IT AND SETTLE YOURSELF DOWN?!
OH! FINE! I'LL SETTLE MYSELF DOWN!
WHAM
WHAM
WHAM
AH!

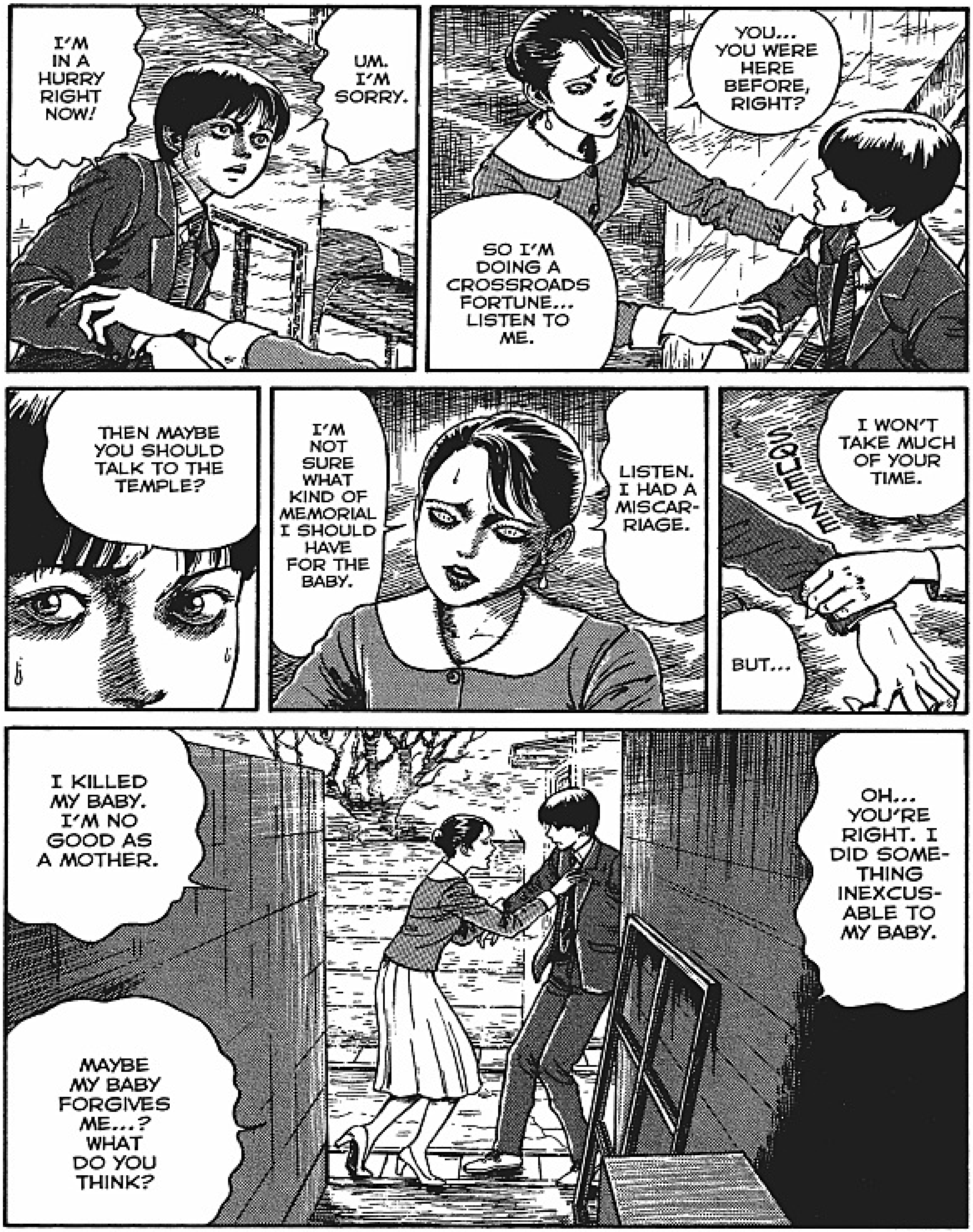

IDIOT! WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!
WHAM
WHAM
STOP... STOP IT!
WHAM
WHAM
UNH!
UNNNNH!
UNNNNH!
CRASH
UNNNNNH!
UNNNNNH!
YOU! AH, SEE! I TOLD YOU! ARE YOU OKAY? HANG ON!

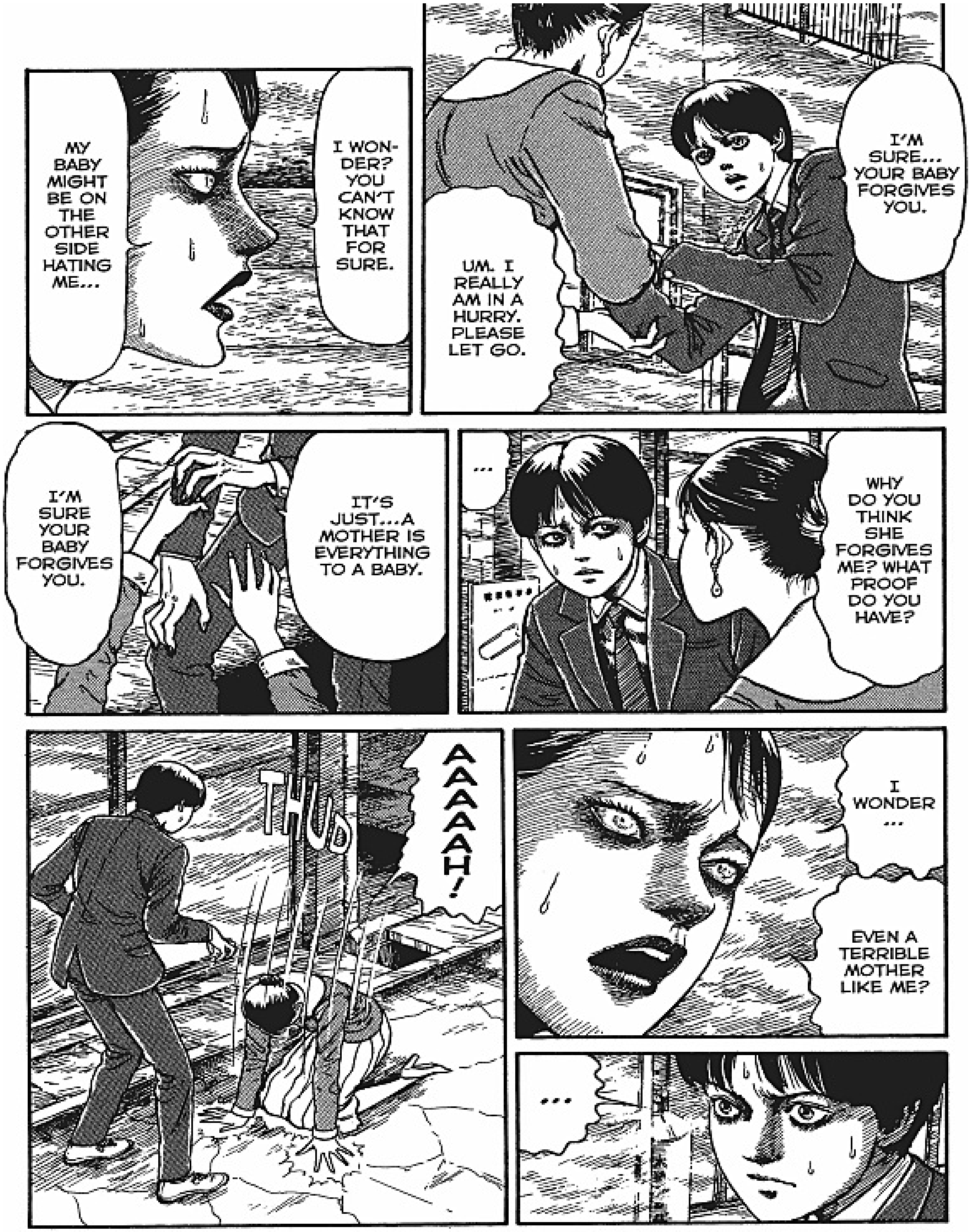

CAN YOU BELIEVE THAT, RYUSUKE?! THIS ACTUALLY HAPPENED.
SO THEN WHAT ABOUT HER?
DRIVE SAF
SHE WAS TAKEN TO THE HOSPITAL RIGHT AWAY... BUT...
MY DAD SAID THEY COULDN'T SAVE THE BABY.
HEY... RYUSUKE? MAYBE IT'S MY FAULT.
MAYBE IT'S MY FAULT SHE DID THAT.
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT, MIDORI?! HOW COULD THIS BE YOUR FAULT?!
IT'S JUST, IF I HADN'T ASKED HER TO THE HOUSE, NONE OF THIS WOULD HAVE HAPPENED...
DON'T BE RIDICULOUS.
SOMETHING WASN'T RIGHT WITH HER FROM THE START! NO MATTER WHAT YOU DID, IT WOULD'VE ENDED UP THE SAME.

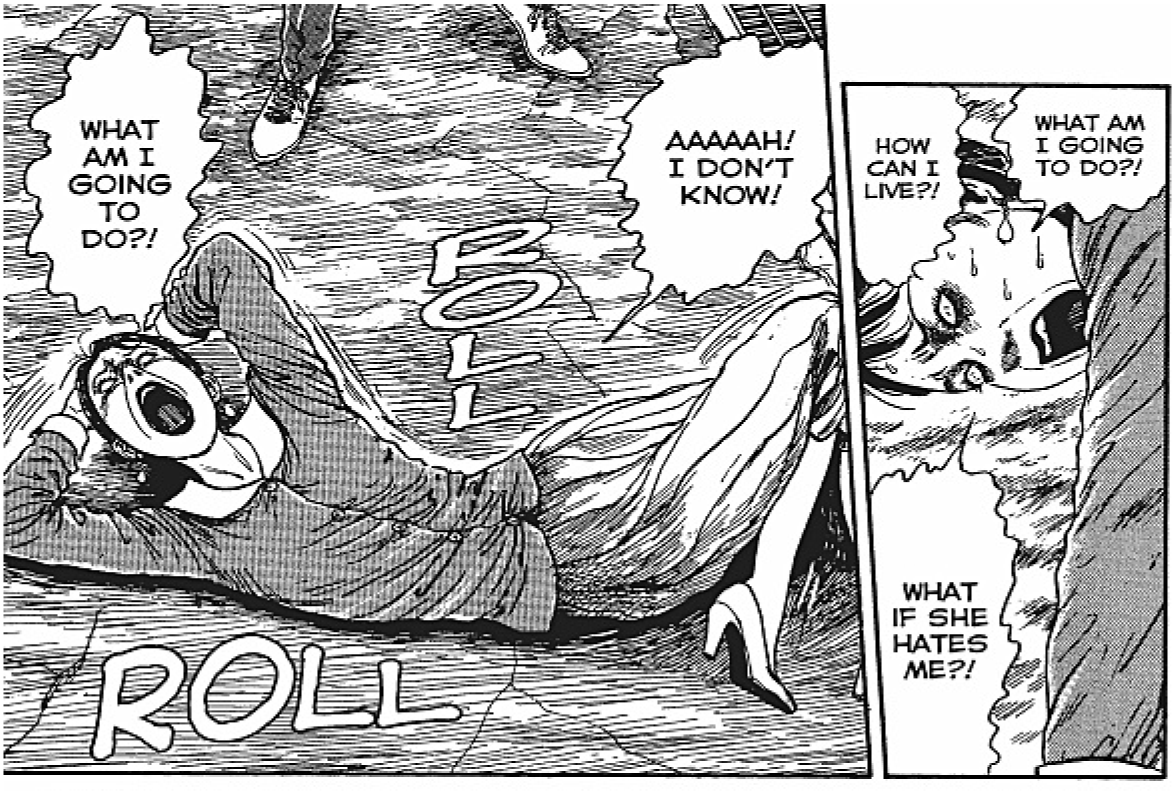

UMI CITY KAWANO
WHAT WAS GOING ON IN THIS TOWN?
I FELT LIKE EVERYONE IN THIS TOWN GOT SWALLOWED UP IN THEIR PROBLEMS, ESPECIALLY ON FOGGY DAYS.
WHICH REMINDED ME. THEY'D FOUND A SEVENTH SUICIDE YESTERDAY.
THERE WERE MORE AND MORE SACRIFICES TO THE BOY AT THE CROSSROADS.
I GOT A MESSAGE FROM YUMI!
SHE SAID SHE FOUND THE BOY AT THE NISHIHATAMACHI INTERSECTION!
SHE SAID IT'S ALMOST FOR SURE HIM.
REALLY ?!
IF WE DON'T HURRY, HE'LL DISAPPEAR SOMEWHERE!

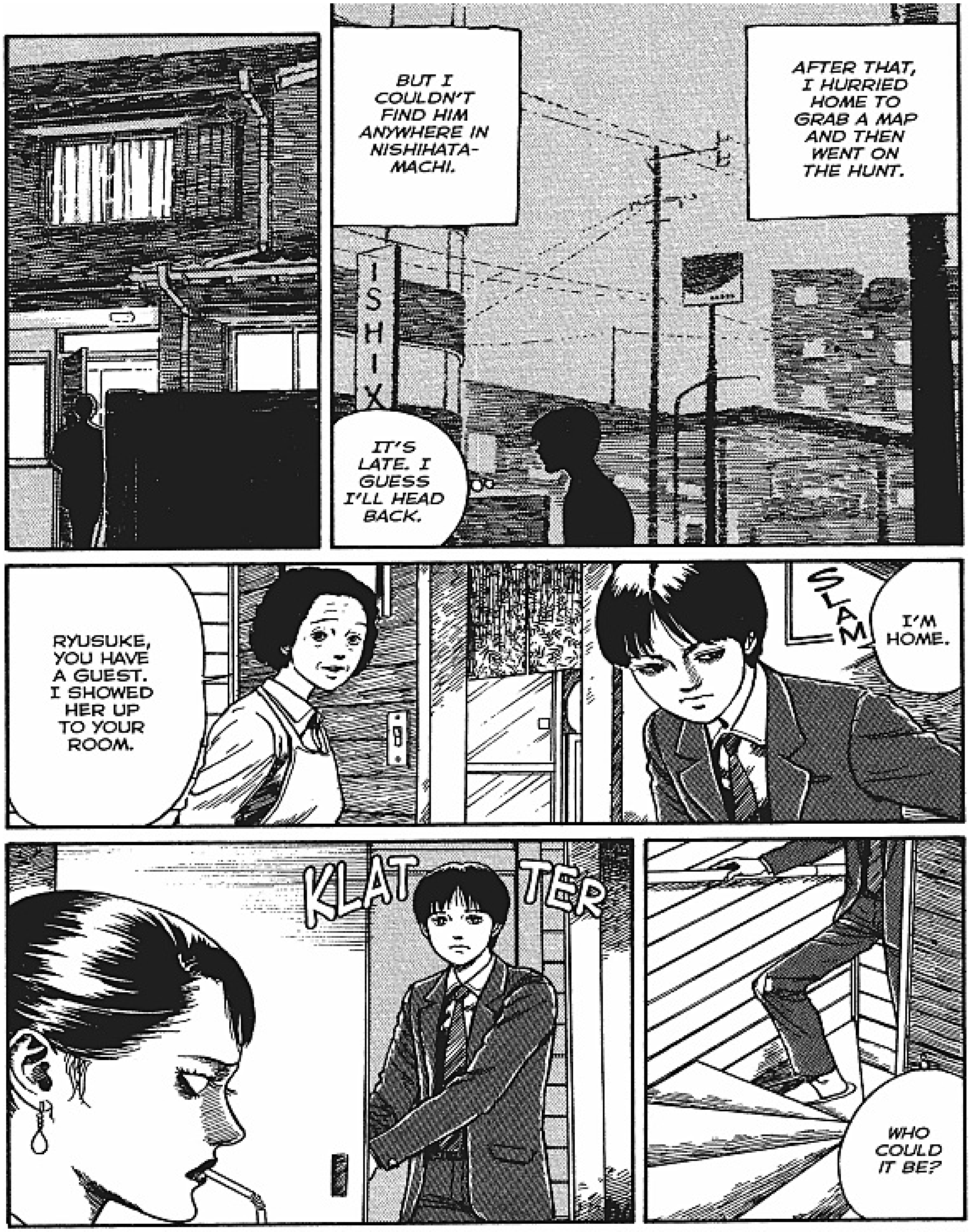

WHAT ARE THEY GOING TO DO?!
WHAT?!
I HAVE TO GO AFTER THEM.
HEEEEY! GIRLS!
IT'S DANGEROUS! YOU SHOULDN'T GOOOOO!
I LOST THEM.
WHERE'S THE INTERSECTION IN NISHIHATA-MACHI?
DAMMIT. IF ONLY I HAD A MAP.
I DID HEAR THAT A BUNCH OF PEOPLE HAVE BEEN RUNNING AROUND TRYING TO GET A GLIMPSE OF HIM.
PEOPLE ARE COMMITTING SUICIDE, THOUGH. WHAT ARE THEY EVEN THINKING?
DON'T THEY KNOW HOW DANGEROUS CONTACT WITH HIM IS?

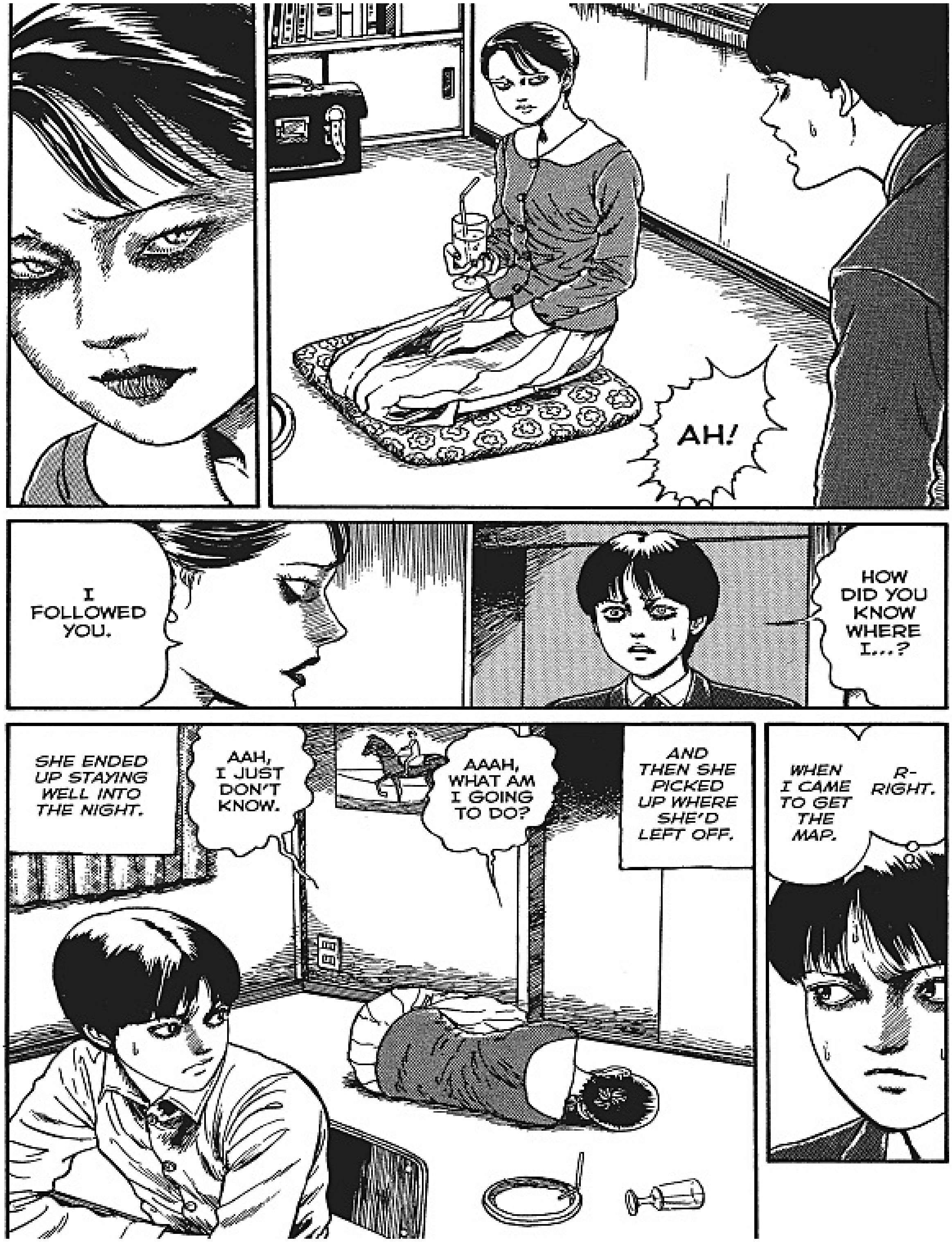

AH!
GRAB
OH!
IT'S YOU...

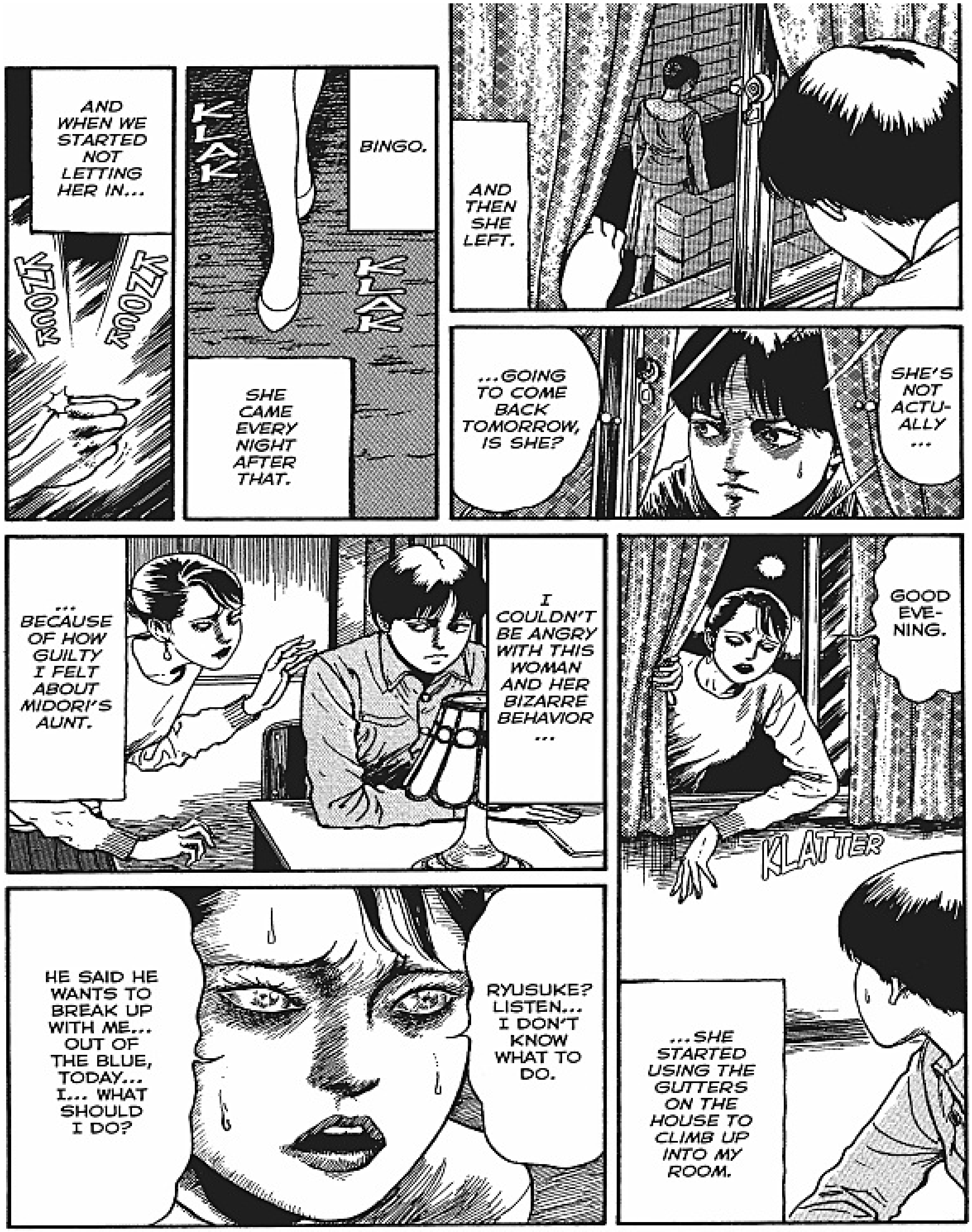

YOU... YOU WERE HERE BEFORE, RIGHT?
SO I'M DOING A CROSSROADS FORTUNE... LISTEN TO ME.
UM. I'M SORRY.
I'M IN A HURRY RIGHT NOW!
I WON'T TAKE MUCH OF YOUR TIME.
SQUEENE
BUT...
LISTEN. I HAD A MISCARRIAGE.
I'M NOT SURE WHAT KIND OF MEMORIAL I SHOULD HAVE FOR THE BABY.
THEN MAYBE YOU SHOULD TALK TO THE TEMPLE?
OH... YOU'RE RIGHT. I DID SOMETHING INEXCUSABLE TO MY BABY.
I KILLED MY BABY. I'M NO GOOD AS A MOTHER.
MAYBE MY BABY FORGIVES ME...? WHAT DO YOU THINK?

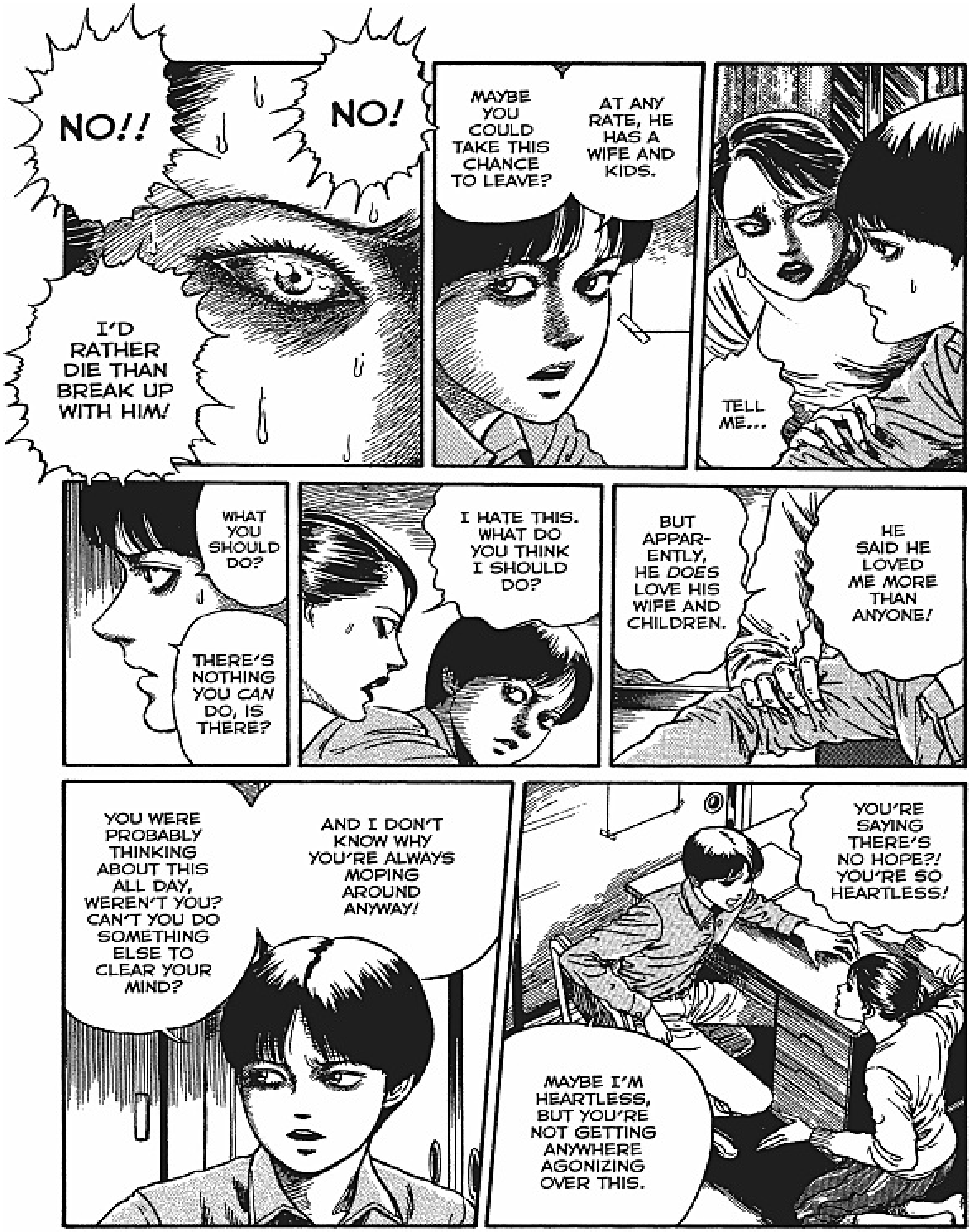

I'M SURE... YOUR BABY FORGIVES YOU.
UM. I REALLY AM IN A HURRY. PLEASE LET GO.
I WONDER? YOU CAN'T KNOW THAT FOR SURE.
MY BABY MIGHT BE ON THE OTHER SIDE HATING ME...
WHY DO YOU THINK SHE FORGIVES ME? WHAT PROOF DO YOU HAVE?
...
IT'S JUST...A MOTHER IS EVERYTHING TO A BABY.
I'M SURE YOUR BABY FORGIVES YOU.
I WONDER...
EVEN A TERRIBLE MOTHER LIKE ME?
...
AAAAAH!
THUD

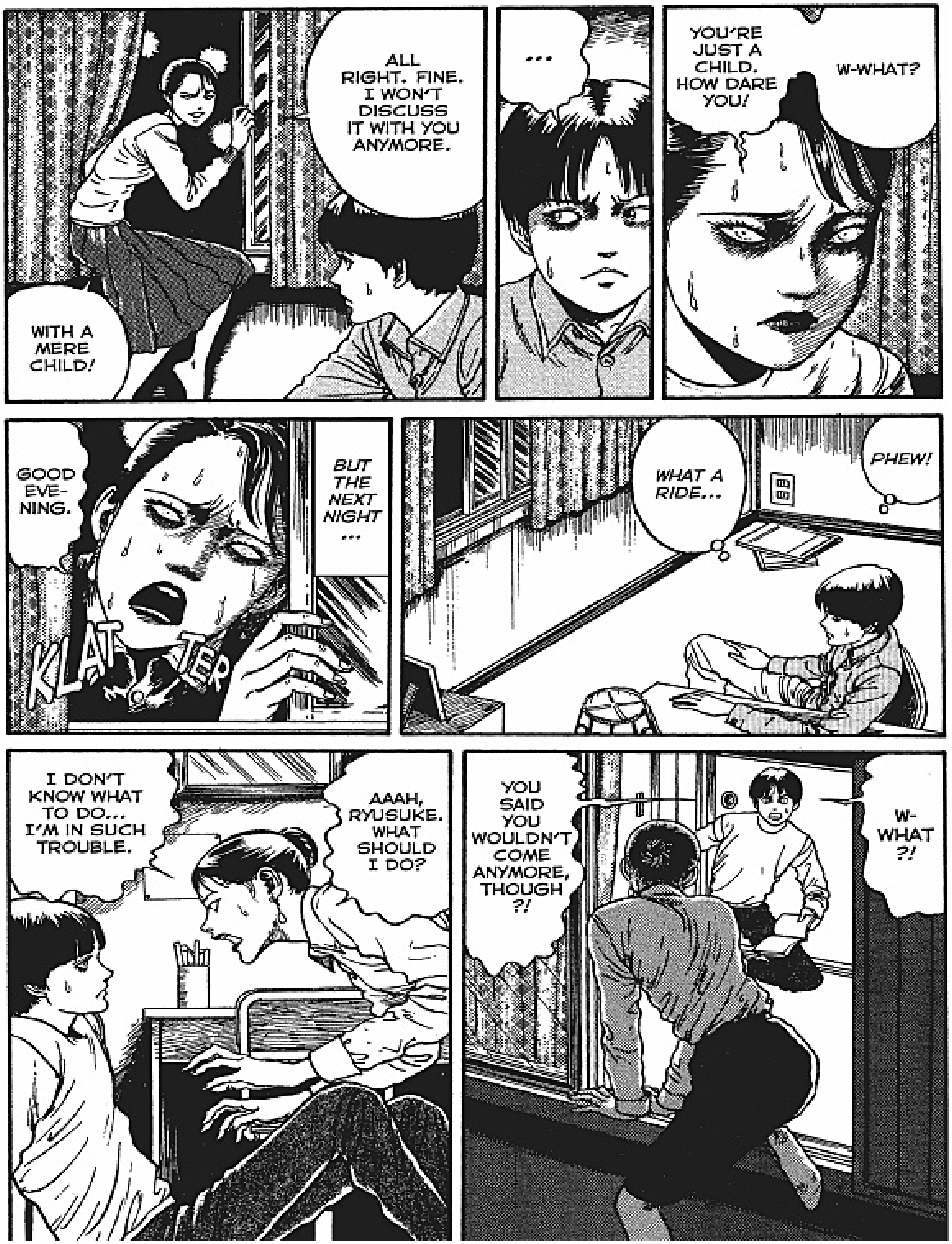

WHAT AM I GOING TO DO?!
HOW CAN I LIVE?!
WHAT IF SHE HATES ME?!
AAAAAH! I DON'T KNOW!
ROLL
WHAT AM I GOING TO DO?!
ROLL
AAAA-AAAH!
...
AAAAAH!
SHE REALLY IS WEIRD...

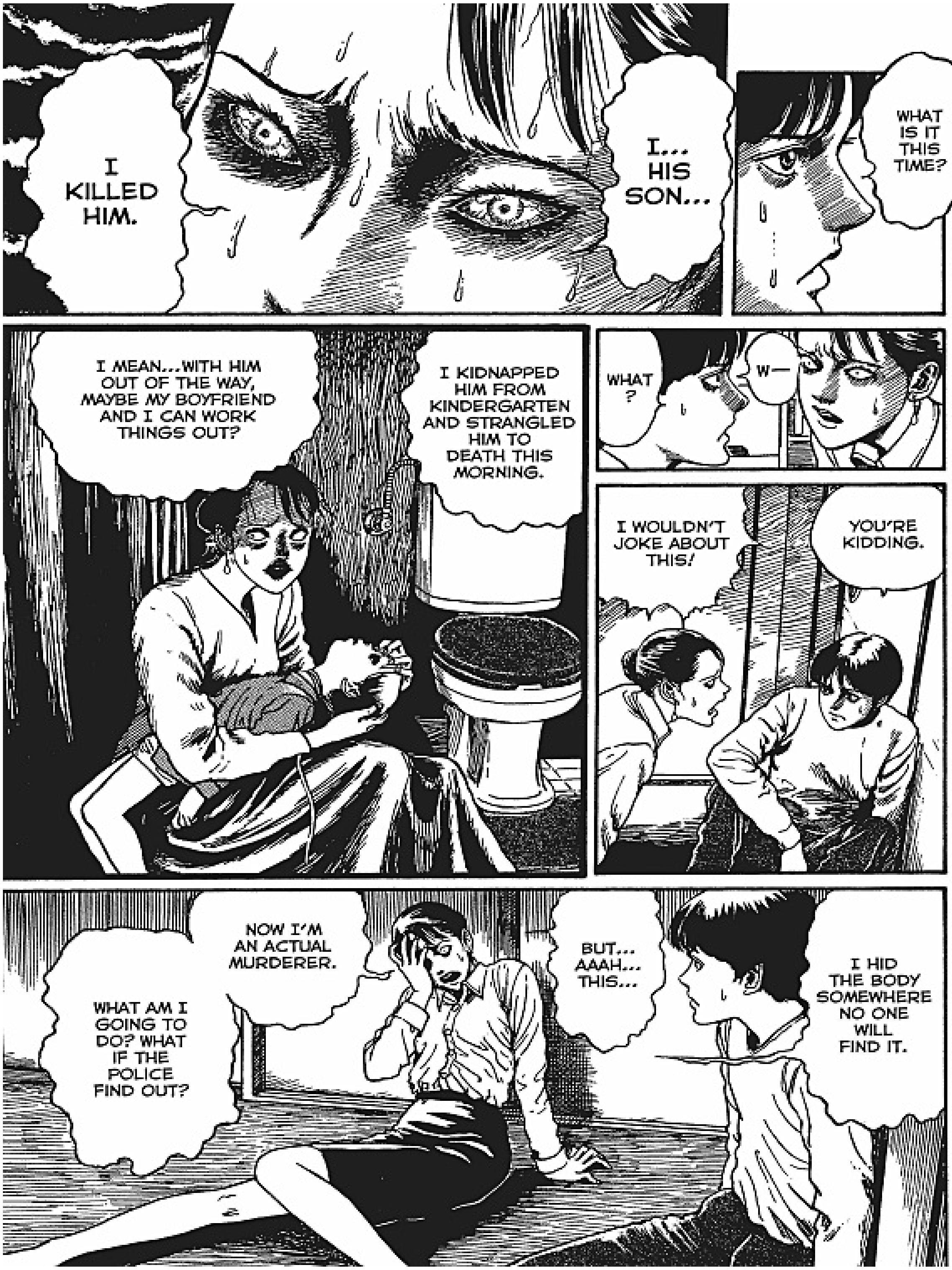

AFTER THAT, I HURRIED HOME TO GRAB A MAP AND THEN WENT ON THE HUNT.
BUT I COULDN'T FIND HIM ANYWHERE IN NISHIHATA-MACHI.
ISHIX
IT'S LATE. I GUESS I'LL HEAD BACK.
I'M HOME.
SLAM
RYUSUKE, YOU HAVE A GUEST. I SHOWED HER UP TO YOUR ROOM.
WHO COULD IT BE?
KLATTER

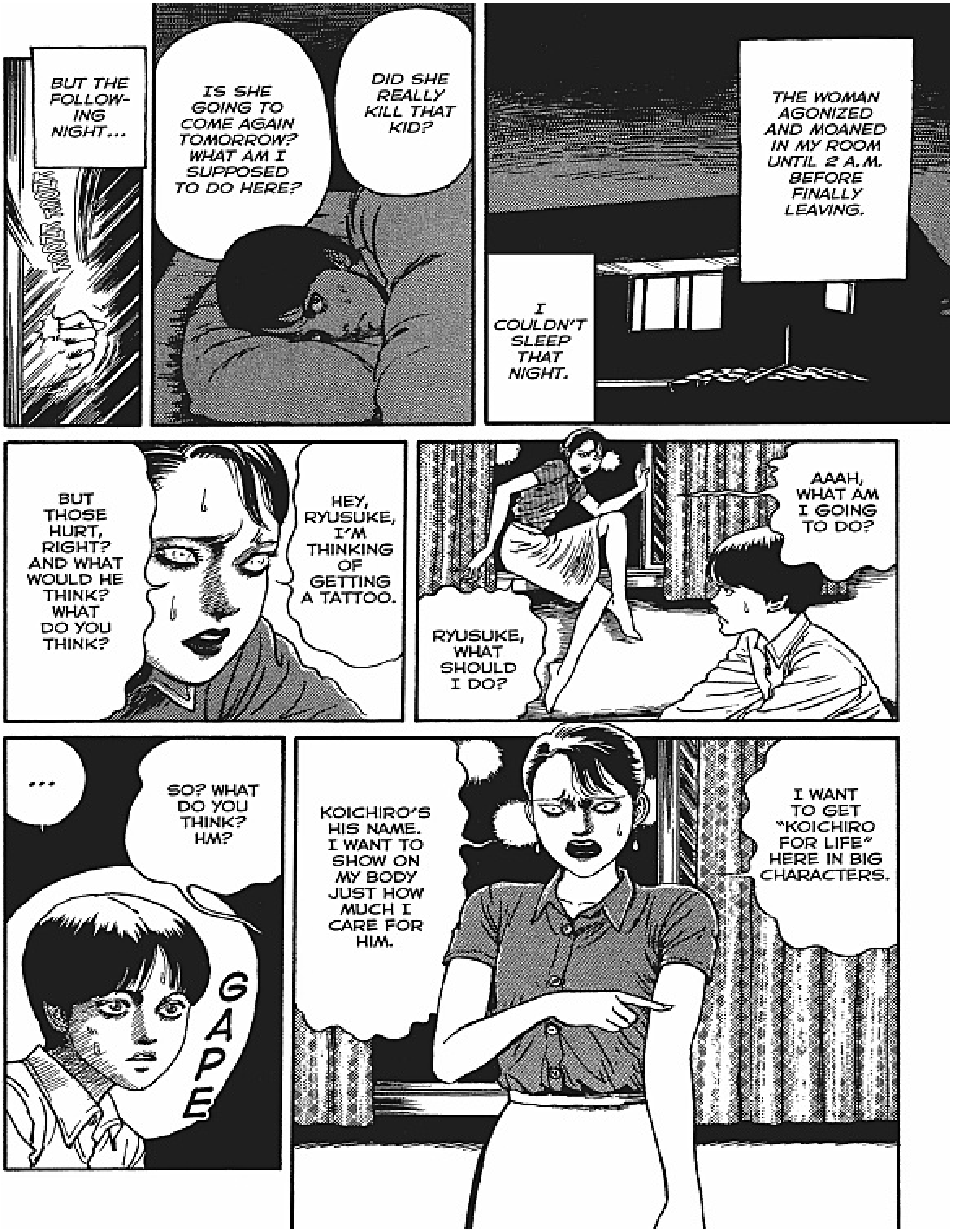

AH!
HOW DID YOU KNOW WHERE I...?
I FOLLOWED YOU.
R-RIGHT.
WHEN I CAME TO GET THE MAP.
AND THEN SHE PICKED UP WHERE SHE'D LEFT OFF.
AAAH, WHAT AM I GOING TO DO?
AAH, I JUST DON'T KNOW.
SHE ENDED UP STAYING WELL INTO THE NIGHT.

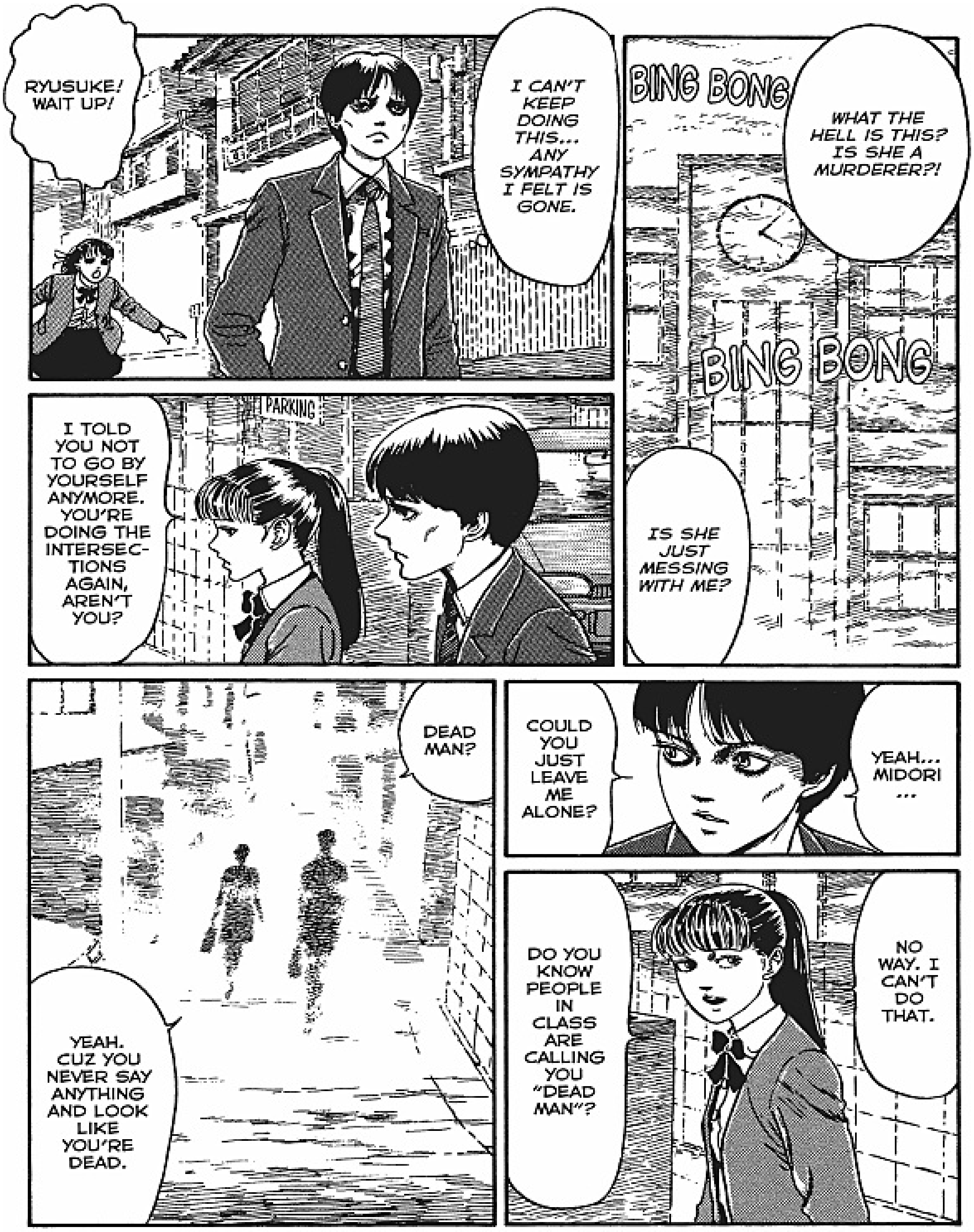

AND THEN SHE LEFT.
SHE'S NOT ACTUALLY...
...GOING TO COME BACK TOMORROW, IS SHE?
BINGO.
KLAK
KLAK
SHE CAME EVERY NIGHT AFTER THAT.
AND WHEN WE STARTED NOT LETTING HER IN...
KNOCK
KNOCK
GOOD EVENING.
KLATTER
...SHE STARTED USING THE GUTTERS ON THE HOUSE TO CLIMB UP INTO MY ROOM.
I COULDN'T BE ANGRY WITH THIS WOMAN AND HER BIZARRE BEHAVIOR...
...BECAUSE OF HOW GUILTY I FELT ABOUT MIDORI'S AUNT.
RYUSUKE? LISTEN... I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO.
HE SAID HE WANTS TO BREAK UP WITH ME... OUT OF THE BLUE, TODAY... I... WHAT SHOULD I DO?

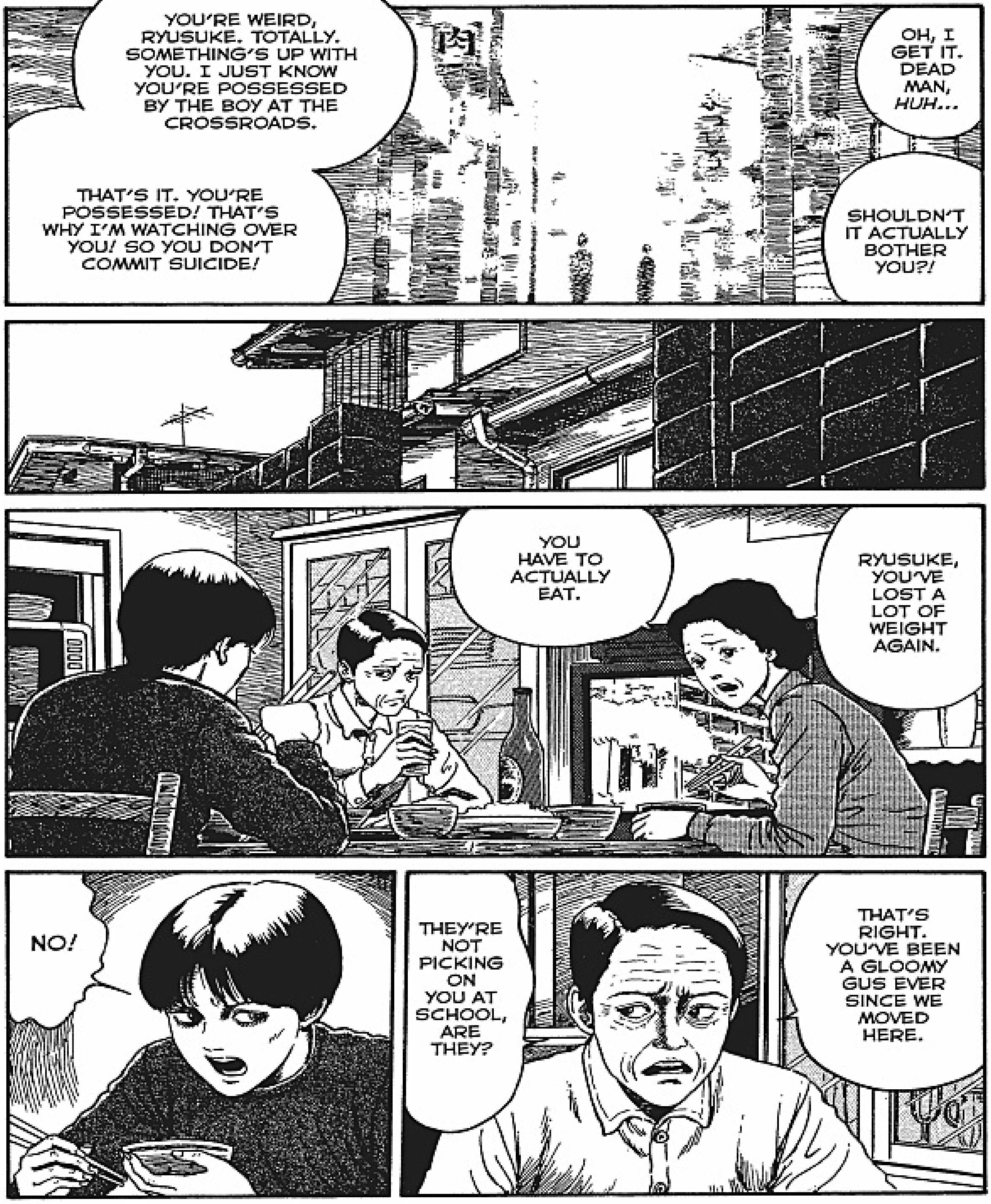

TELL ME...
AT ANY RATE, HE HAS A WIFE AND KIDS.
MAYBE YOU COULD TAKE THIS CHANCE TO LEAVE?
NO!
NO!!
I'D RATHER DIE THAN BREAK UP WITH HIM!
HE SAID HE LOVED ME MORE THAN ANYONE!
BUT APPARENTLY, HE *DOES* LOVE HIS WIFE AND CHILDREN.
I HATE THIS. WHAT DO YOU THINK I SHOULD DO?
WHAT YOU SHOULD DO?
THERE'S NOTHING YOU *CAN* DO, IS THERE?
YOU'RE SAYING THERE'S NO HOPE?! YOU'RE SO HEARTLESS!
MAYBE I'M HEARTLESS, BUT YOU'RE NOT GETTING ANYWHERE AGONIZING OVER THIS.
AND I DON'T KNOW WHY YOU'RE ALWAYS MOPING AROUND ANYWAY!
YOU WERE PROBABLY THINKING ABOUT THIS ALL DAY, WEREN'T YOU? CAN'T YOU DO SOMETHING ELSE TO CLEAR YOUR MIND?

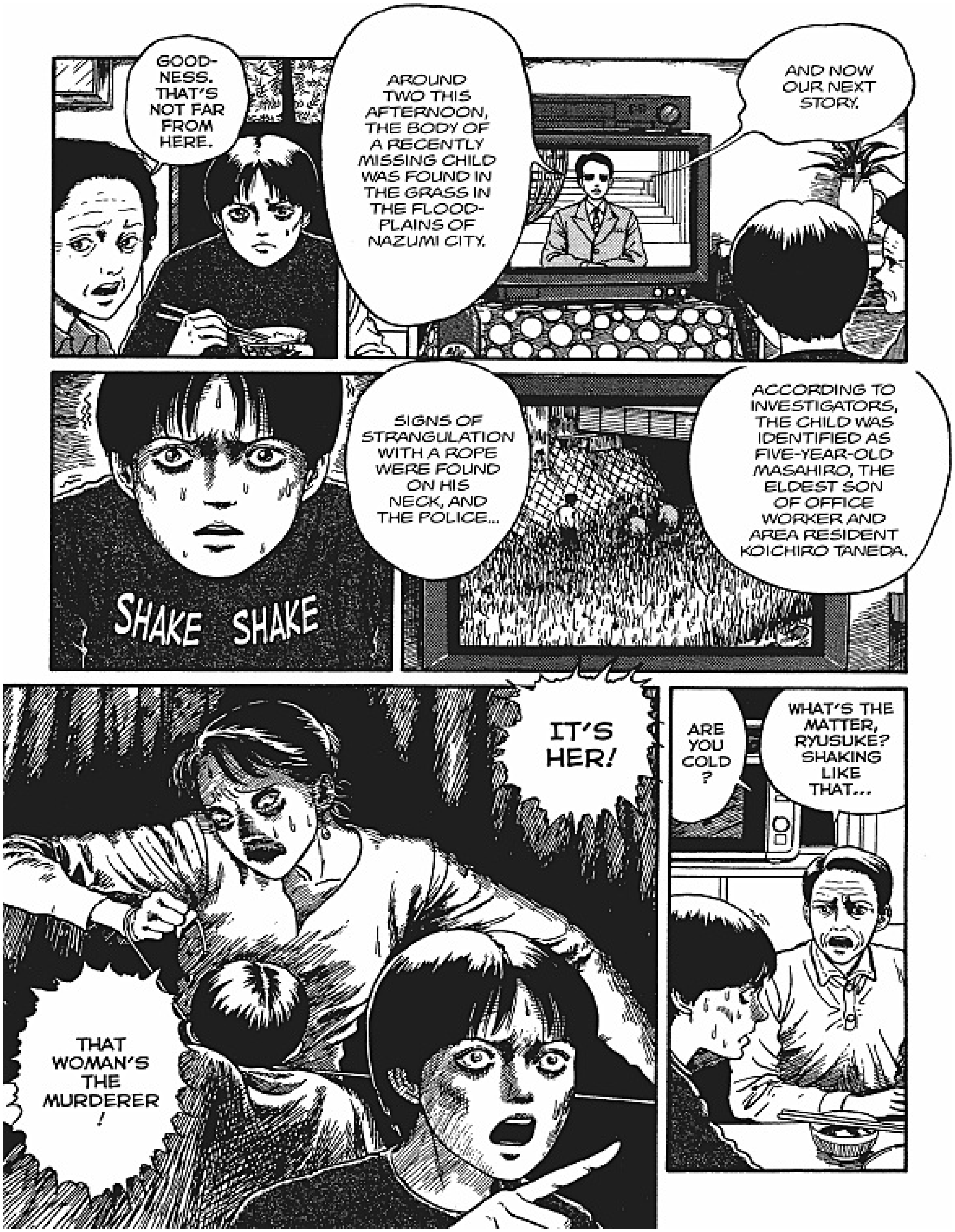

W-WHAT?
YOU'RE JUST A CHILD. HOW DARE YOU!
...
ALL RIGHT. FINE. I WON'T DISCUSS IT WITH YOU ANYMORE.
WITH A MERE CHILD!
PHEW!
WHAT A RIDE...
BUT THE NEXT NIGHT...
GOOD EVENING.
KLAT TER
W-WHAT?!
YOU SAID YOU WOULDN'T COME ANYMORE, THOUGH?!
AAAH, RYUSUKE. WHAT SHOULD I DO?
I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO... I'M IN SUCH TROUBLE.

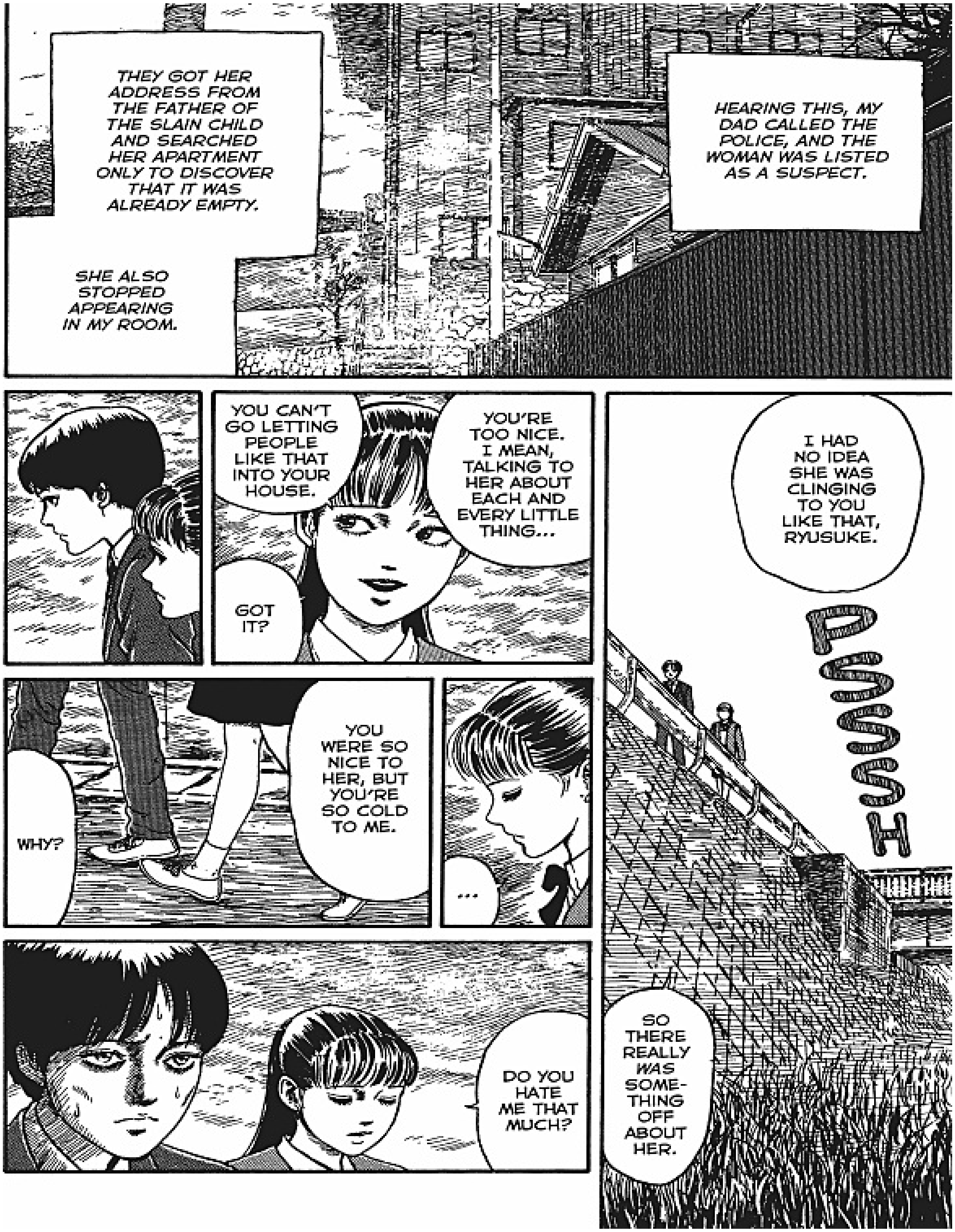

WHAT IS IT THIS TIME?
I... HIS SON...
I KILLED HIM.
W—
WHAT ?
YOU'RE KIDDING.
I WOULDN'T JOKE ABOUT THIS!
I KIDNAPPED HIM FROM KINDERGARTEN AND STRANGLED HIM TO DEATH THIS MORNING.
I MEAN...WITH HIM OUT OF THE WAY, MAYBE MY BOYFRIEND AND I CAN WORK THINGS OUT?
I HID THE BODY SOMEWHERE NO ONE WILL FIND IT.
BUT... AAAH... THIS...
NOW I'M AN ACTUAL MURDERER.
WHAT AM I GOING TO DO? WHAT IF THE POLICE FIND OUT?

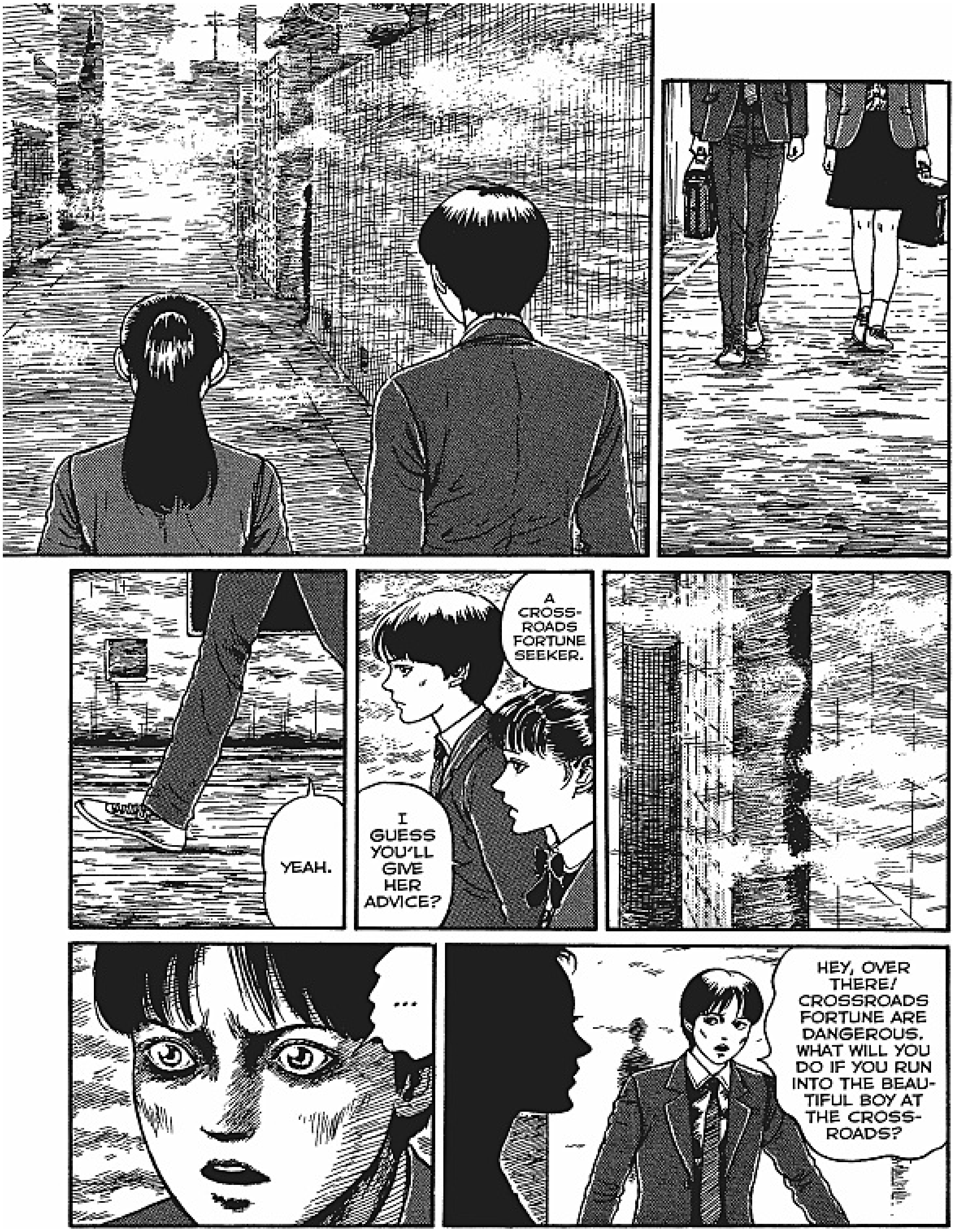

THE WOMAN AGONIZED AND MOANED IN MY ROOM UNTIL 2 A.M. BEFORE FINALLY LEAVING.
I COULDN'T SLEEP THAT NIGHT.
DID SHE REALLY KILL THAT KID?
IS SHE GOING TO COME AGAIN TOMORROW? WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TO DO HERE?
BUT THE FOLLOW-ING NIGHT...
AAAH, WHAT AM I GOING TO DO?
RYUSUKE, WHAT SHOULD I DO?
HEY, RYUSUKE, I'M THINKING OF GETTING A TATTOO.
BUT THOSE HURT, RIGHT? AND WHAT WOULD HE THINK? WHAT DO YOU THINK?
I WANT TO GET "KOICHIRO FOR LIFE" HERE IN BIG CHARACTERS.
KOICHIRO'S HIS NAME. I WANT TO SHOW ON MY BODY JUST HOW MUCH I CARE FOR HIM.
SO? WHAT DO YOU THINK? HM?
...
GAPE

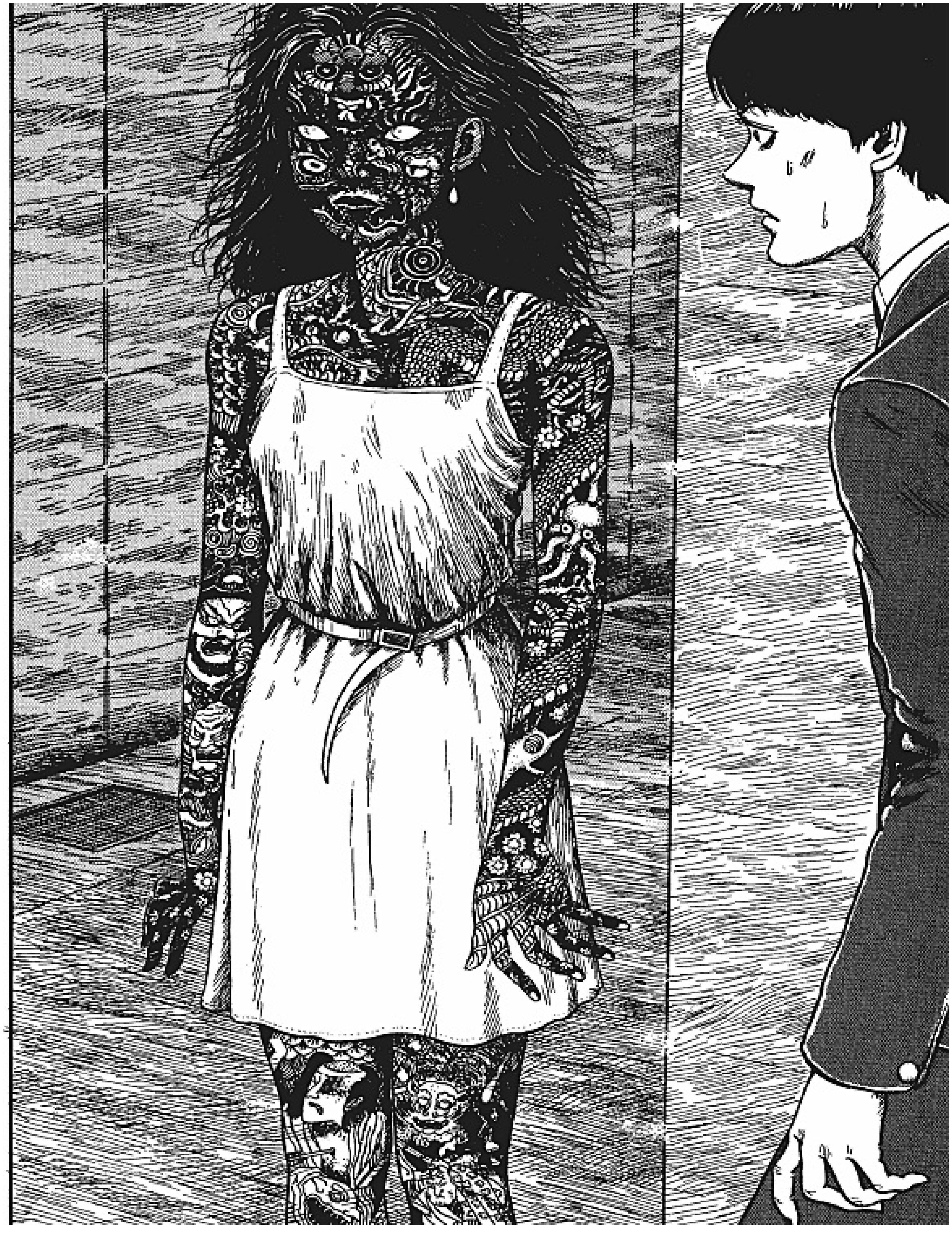

BING BONG
WHAT THE HELL IS THIS? IS SHE A MURDERER?!
BING BONG
IS SHE JUST MESSING WITH ME?
I CAN'T KEEP DOING THIS... ANY SYMPATHY I FELT IS GONE.
RYUSUKE! WAIT UP!
PARKING
I TOLD YOU NOT TO GO BY YOURSELF ANYMORE. YOU'RE DOING THE INTERSECTIONS AGAIN, AREN'T YOU?
YEAH... MIDORI...
COULD YOU JUST LEAVE ME ALONE?
NO WAY. I CAN'T DO THAT.
DO YOU KNOW PEOPLE IN CLASS ARE CALLING YOU "DEAD MAN"?
DEAD MAN?
YEAH. CUZ YOU NEVER SAY ANYTHING AND LOOK LIKE YOU'RE DEAD.

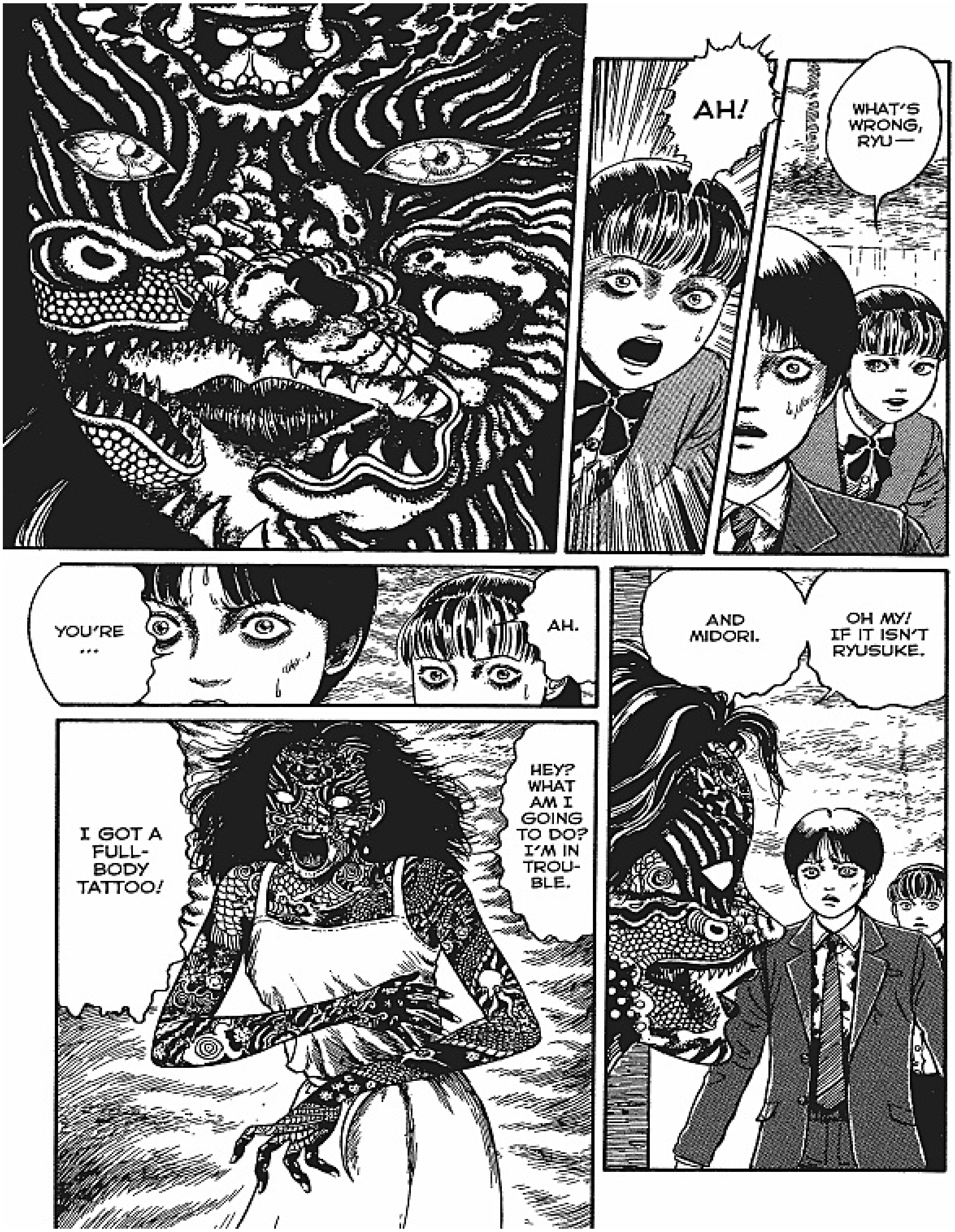

肉
OH, I GET IT. DEAD MAN, *HUH*...
SHOULDN'T IT ACTUALLY BOTHER YOU?!
YOU'RE WEIRD, RYUSUKE. TOTALLY. SOMETHING'S UP WITH YOU. I JUST KNOW YOU'RE POSSESSED BY THE BOY AT THE CROSSROADS.
THAT'S IT. YOU'RE POSSESSED! THAT'S WHY I'M WATCHING OVER YOU! SO YOU DON'T COMMIT SUICIDE!
RYUSUKE, YOU'VE LOST A LOT OF WEIGHT AGAIN.
YOU HAVE TO ACTUALLY EAT.
THAT'S RIGHT. YOU'VE BEEN A GLOOMY GUS EVER SINCE WE MOVED HERE.
THEY'RE NOT PICKING ON YOU AT SCHOOL, ARE THEY?
NO!

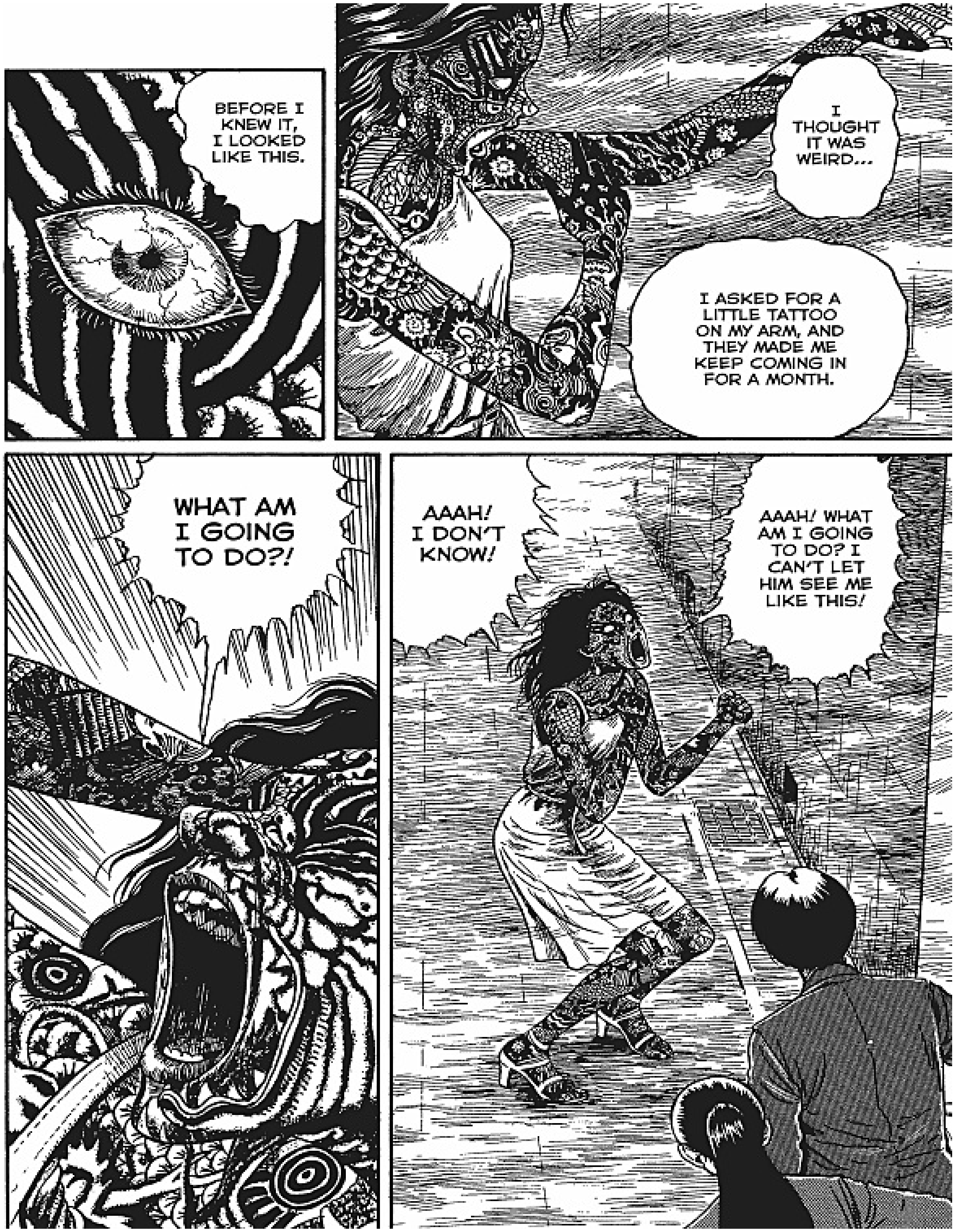

AND NOW OUR NEXT STORY.
AROUND TWO THIS AFTERNOON, THE BODY OF A RECENTLY MISSING CHILD WAS FOUND IN THE GRASS IN THE FLOODPLAINS OF NAZUMI CITY.
GOODNESS. THAT'S NOT FAR FROM HERE.
ACCORDING TO INVESTIGATORS, THE CHILD WAS IDENTIFIED AS FIVE-YEAR-OLD MASAHIRO, THE ELDEST SON OF OFFICE WORKER AND AREA RESIDENT KOICHIRO TANEDA.
SIGNS OF STRANGULATION WITH A ROPE WERE FOUND ON HIS NECK, AND THE POLICE...
SHAKE SHAKE
WHAT'S THE MATTER, RYUSUKE? SHAKING LIKE THAT...
ARE YOU COLD?
IT'S HER!
THAT WOMAN'S THE MURDERER!

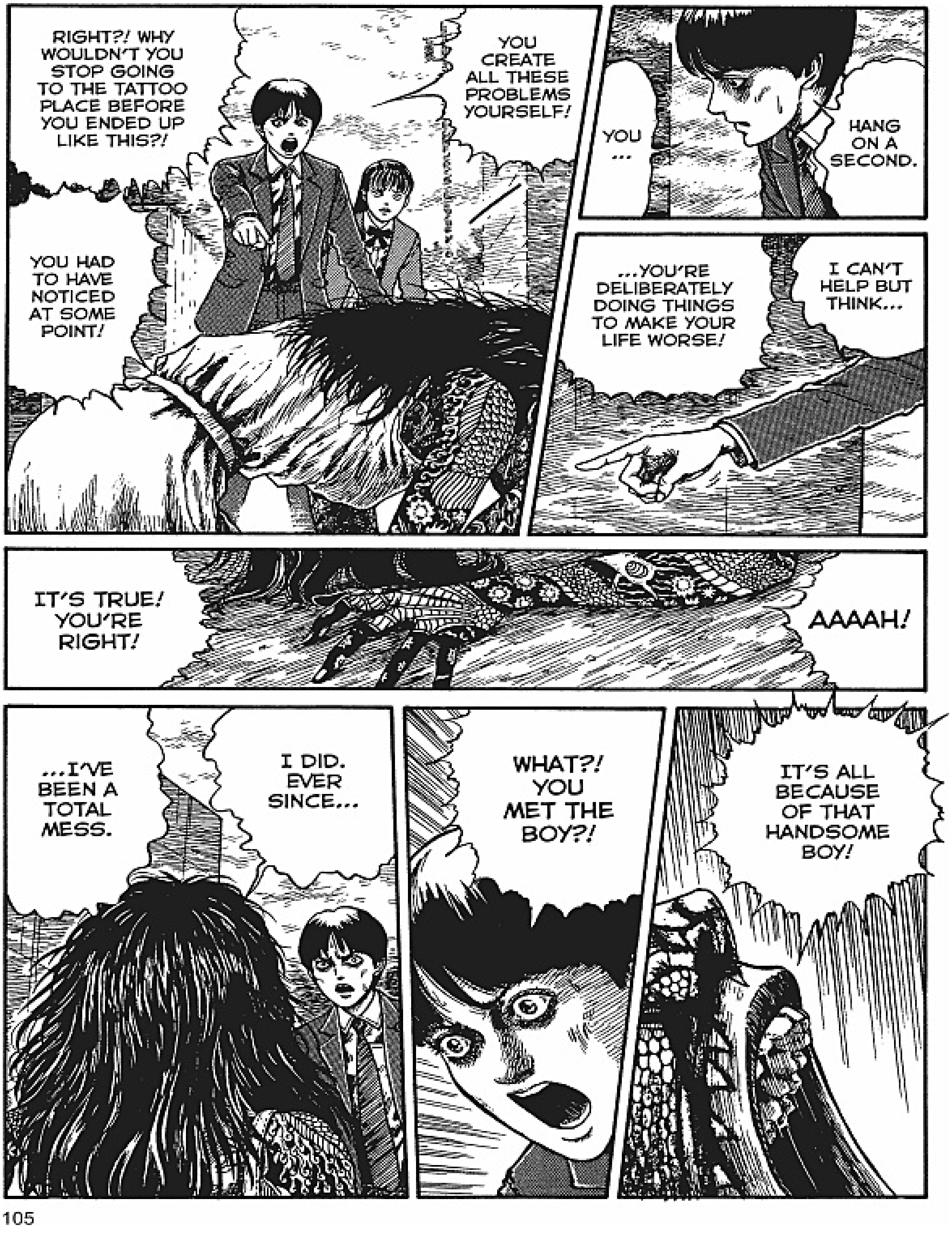

HEARING THIS, MY DAD CALLED THE POLICE, AND THE WOMAN WAS LISTED AS A SUSPECT.
THEY GOT HER ADDRESS FROM THE FATHER OF THE SLAIN CHILD AND SEARCHED HER APARTMENT ONLY TO DISCOVER THAT IT WAS ALREADY EMPTY.
SHE ALSO STOPPED APPEARING IN MY ROOM.
I HAD NO IDEA SHE WAS CLINGING TO YOU LIKE THAT, RYUSUKE.
PUSSH
SO THERE REALLY *WAS* SOMETHING OFF ABOUT HER.
YOU'RE TOO NICE. I MEAN, TALKING TO HER ABOUT EACH AND EVERY LITTLE THING...
YOU CAN'T GO LETTING PEOPLE LIKE THAT INTO YOUR HOUSE.
GOT IT?
...
YOU WERE SO NICE TO HER, BUT YOU'RE SO COLD TO ME.
WHY?
DO YOU HATE ME THAT MUCH?

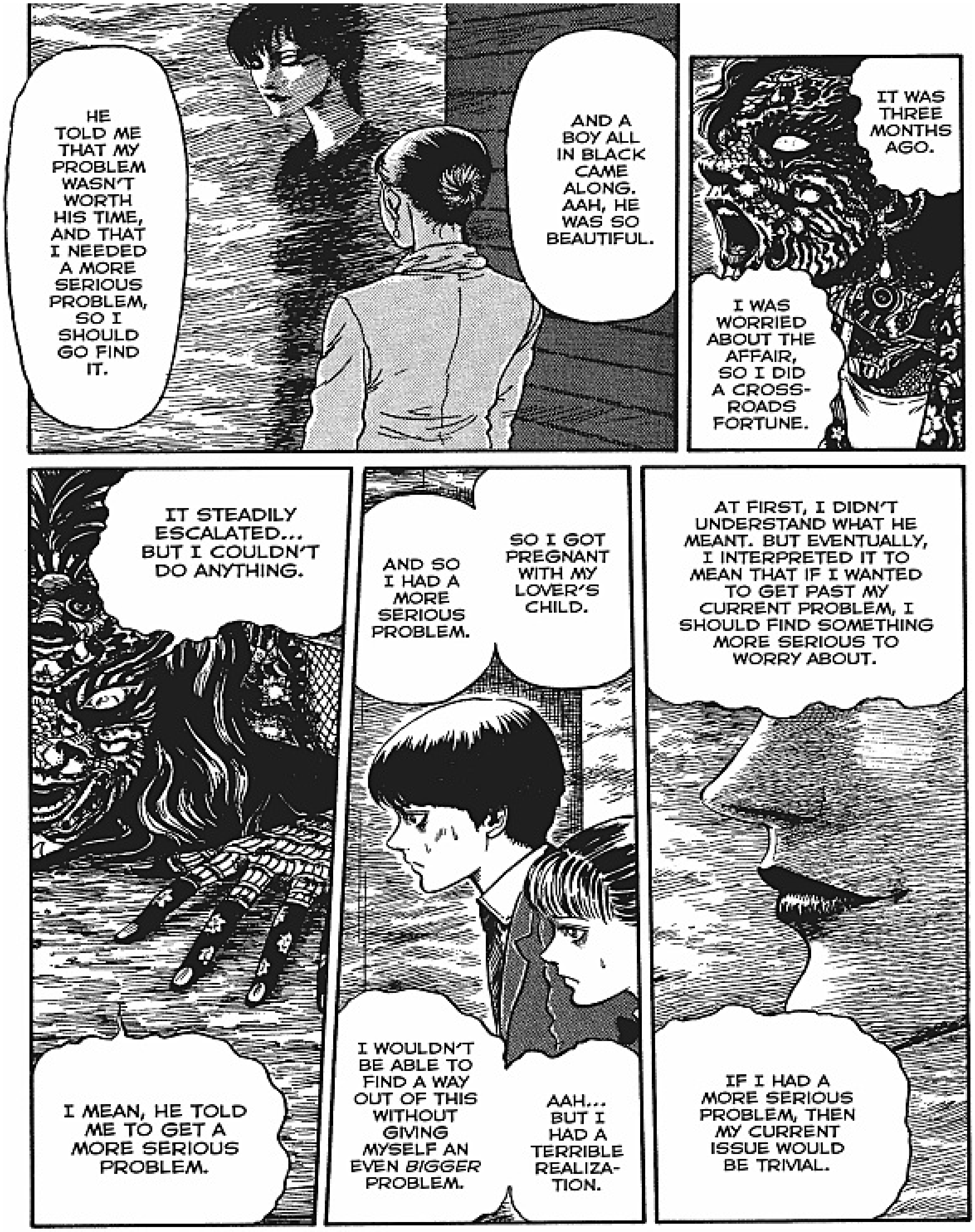

A CROSSROADS FORTUNE SEEKER.
I GUESS YOU'LL GIVE HER ADVICE?
YEAH.
HEY, OVER THERE! CROSSROADS FORTUNE ARE DANGEROUS. WHAT WILL YOU DO IF YOU RUN INTO THE BEAUTIFUL BOY AT THE CROSSROADS?
...

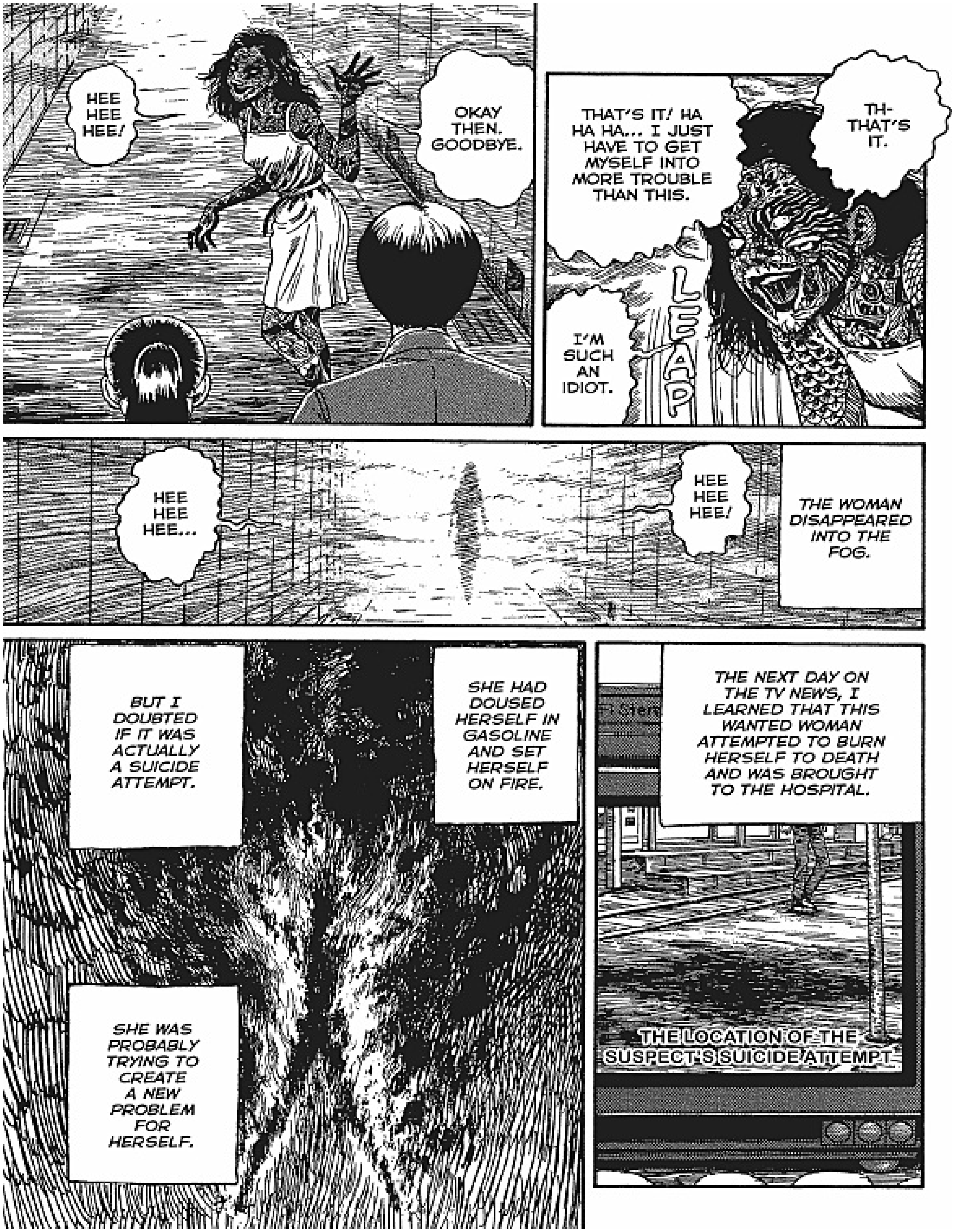


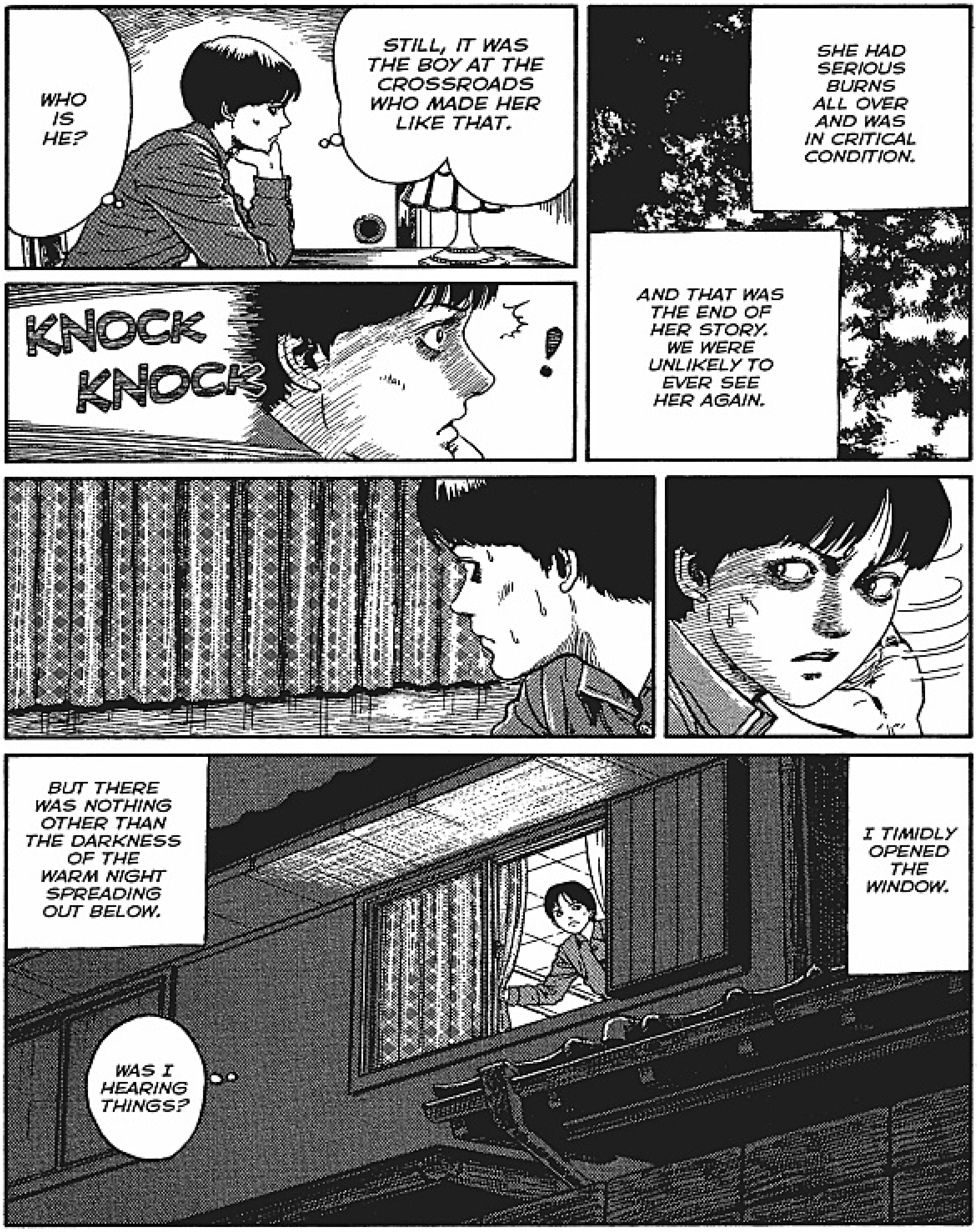

WHAT'S WRONG, RYU—
AH!
OH MY! IF IT ISN'T RYUSUKE.
AND MIDORI.
AH.
YOU'RE ...
HEY? WHAT AM I GOING TO DO? I'M IN TROUBLE.
I GOT A FULL-BODY TATTOO!


I THOUGHT IT WAS WEIRD...
I ASKED FOR A LITTLE TATTOO ON MY ARM, AND THEY MADE ME KEEP COMING IN FOR A MONTH.
BEFORE I KNEW IT, I LOOKED LIKE THIS.
AAAH! WHAT AM I GOING TO DO? I CAN'T LET HIM SEE ME LIKE THIS!
AAAH! I DON'T KNOW!
WHAT AM I GOING TO DO?!

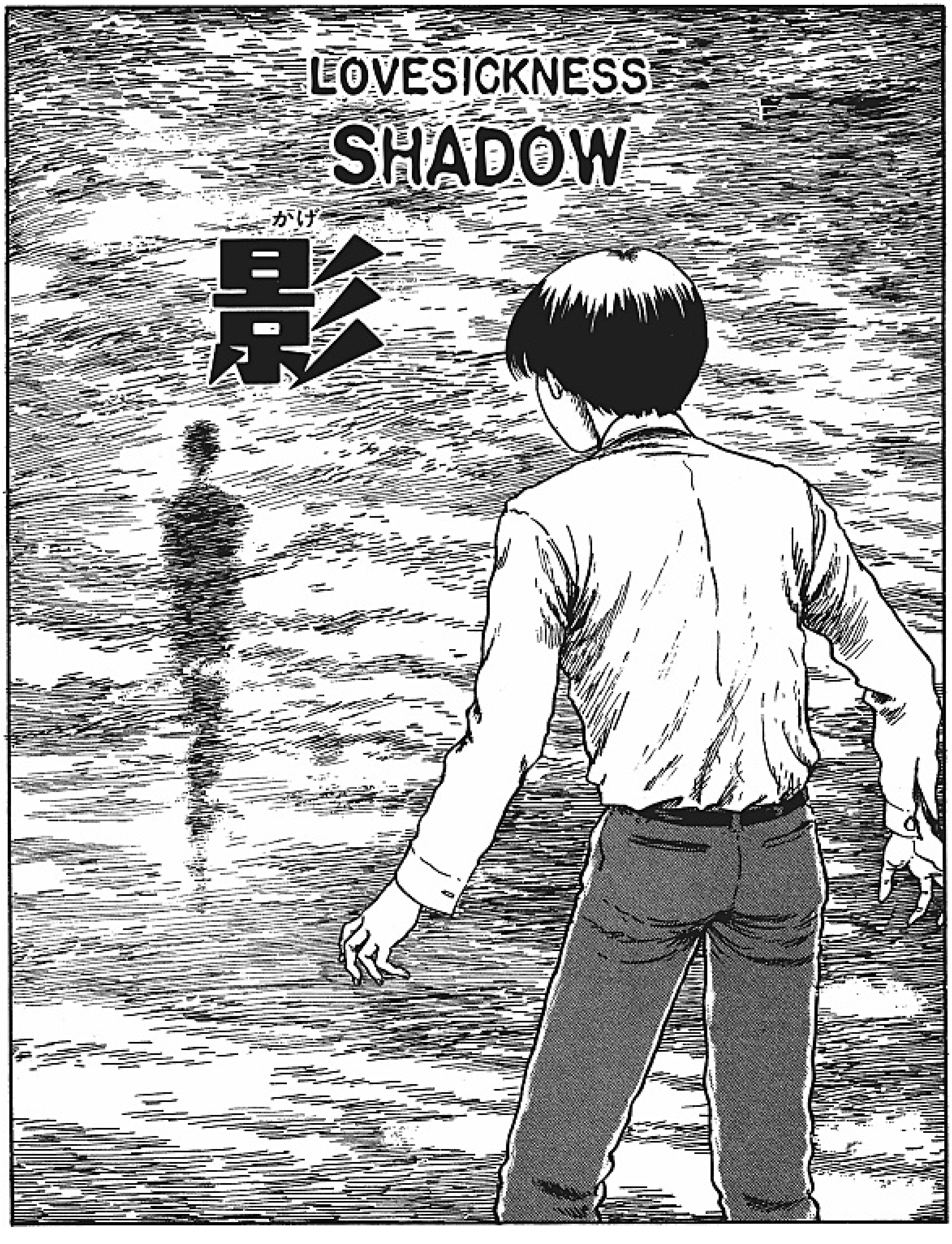

RIGHT?! WHY WOULDN'T YOU STOP GOING TO THE TATTOO PLACE BEFORE YOU ENDED UP LIKE THIS?!
YOU CREATE ALL THESE PROBLEMS YOURSELF!
YOU HAD TO HAVE NOTICED AT SOME POINT!
HANG ON A SECOND.
YOU...
I CAN'T HELP BUT THINK...
...YOU'RE DELIBERATELY DOING THINGS TO MAKE YOUR LIFE WORSE!
AAAAH!
IT'S TRUE! YOU'RE RIGHT!
I DID. EVER SINCE...
...I'VE BEEN A TOTAL MESS.
IT'S ALL BECAUSE OF THAT HANDSOME BOY!
WHAT?! YOU MET THE BOY?!

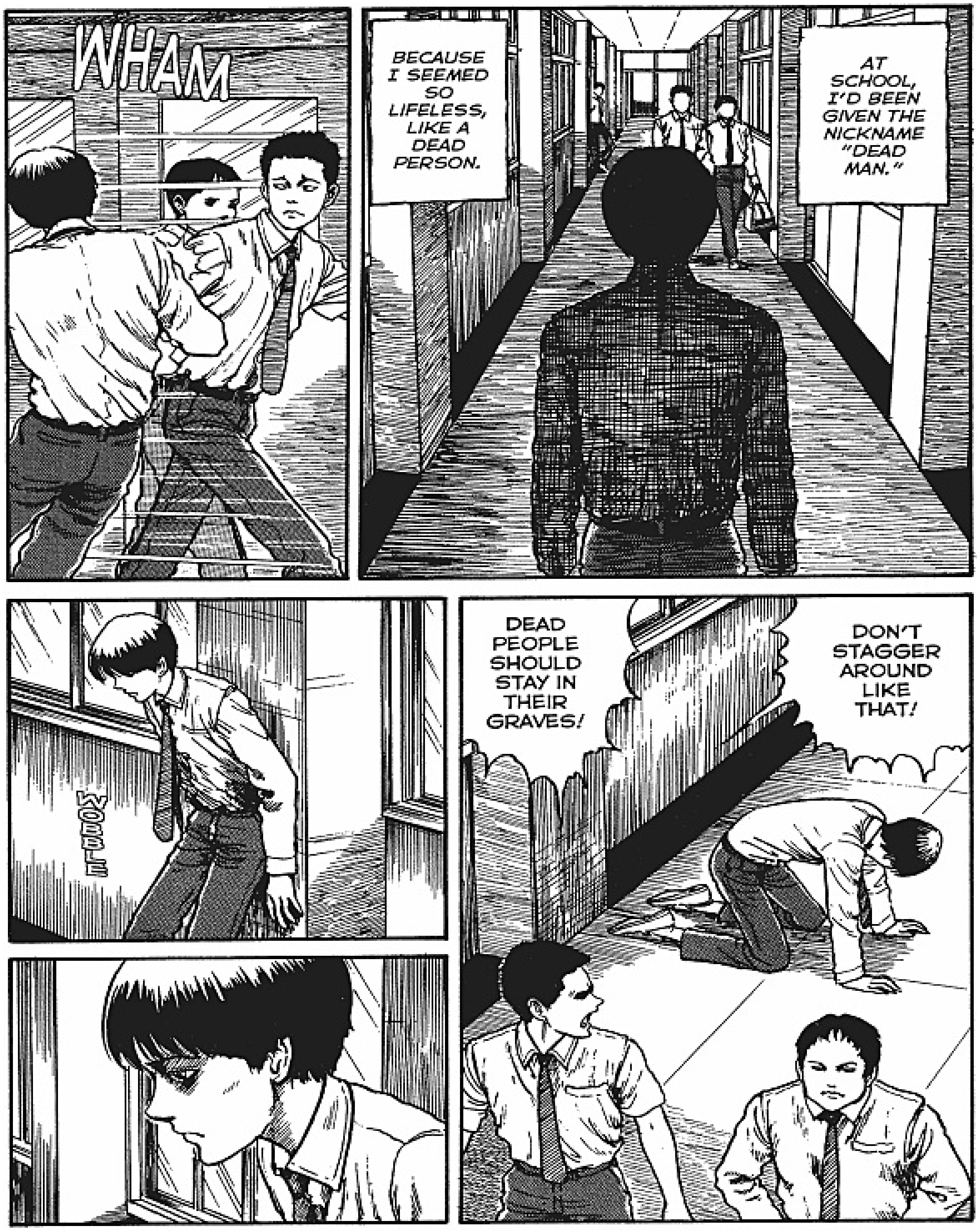

IT WAS THREE MONTHS AGO.
I WAS WORRIED ABOUT THE AFFAIR, SO I DID A CROSS-ROADS FORTUNE.
AND A BOY ALL IN BLACK CAME ALONG. AAH, HE WAS SO BEAUTIFUL.
HE TOLD ME THAT MY PROBLEM WASN'T WORTH HIS TIME, AND THAT I NEEDED A MORE SERIOUS PROBLEM, SO I SHOULD GO FIND IT.
AT FIRST, I DIDN'T UNDERSTAND WHAT HE MEANT. BUT EVENTUALLY, I INTERPRETED IT TO MEAN THAT IF I WANTED TO GET PAST MY CURRENT PROBLEM, I SHOULD FIND SOMETHING MORE SERIOUS TO WORRY ABOUT.
IF I HAD A MORE SERIOUS PROBLEM, THEN MY CURRENT ISSUE WOULD BE TRIVIAL.
SO I GOT PREGNANT WITH MY LOVER'S CHILD.
AND SO I HAD A MORE SERIOUS PROBLEM.
AAH... BUT I HAD A TERRIBLE REALIZATION.
I WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO FIND A WAY OUT OF THIS WITHOUT GIVING MYSELF AN EVEN *BIGGER* PROBLEM.
IT STEADILY ESCALATED... BUT I COULDN'T DO ANYTHING.
I MEAN, HE TOLD ME TO GET A MORE SERIOUS PROBLEM.

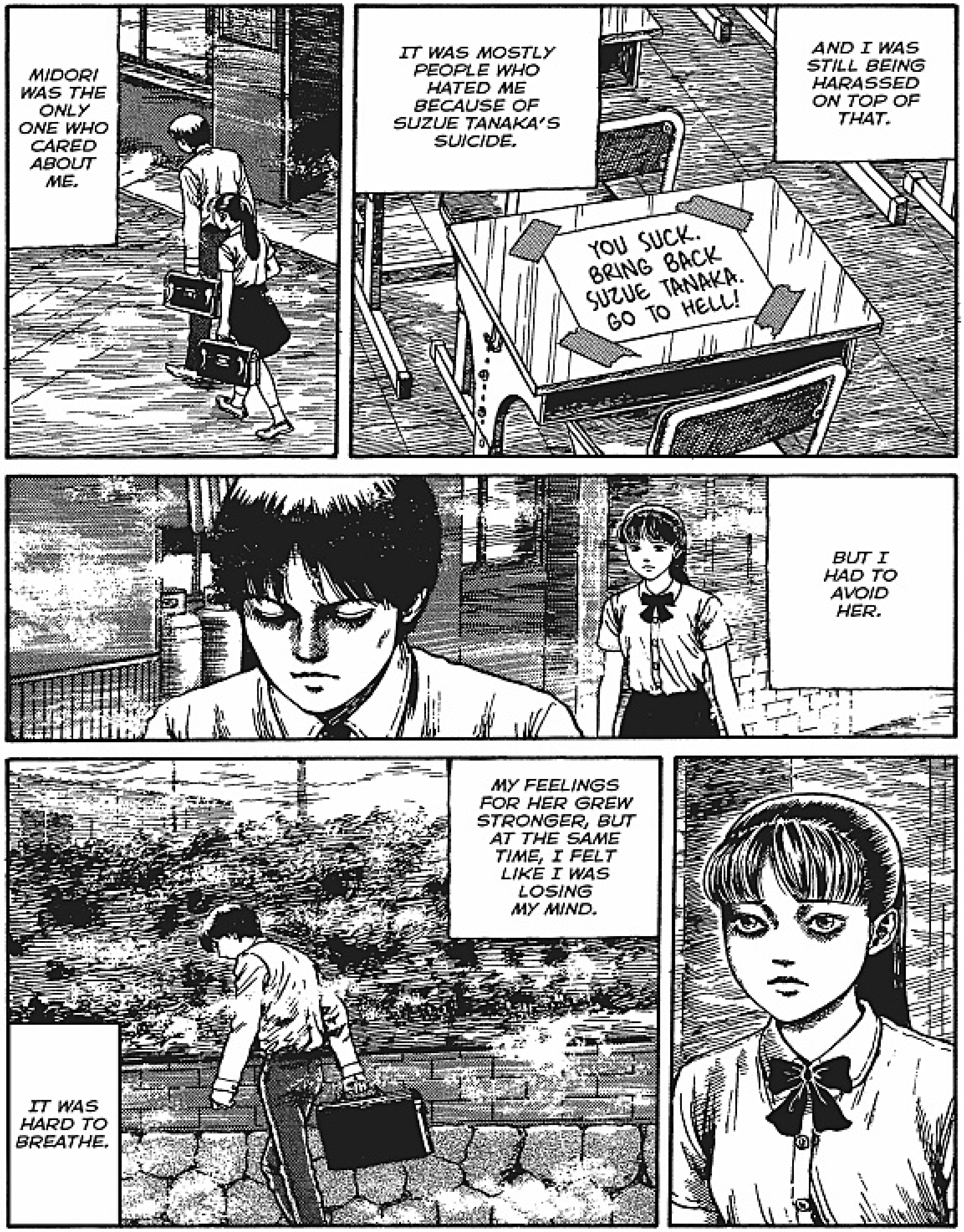

TH- THAT'S IT.
THAT'S IT! HA HA HA... I JUST HAVE TO GET MYSELF INTO MORE TROUBLE THAN THIS.
I'M SUCH AN IDIOT.
LEAP
OKAY THEN. GOODBYE.
HEE HEE HEE!
THE WOMAN DISAPPEARED INTO THE FOG.
HEE HEE HEE!
HEE HEE HEE...
THE NEXT DAY ON THE TV NEWS, I LEARNED THAT THIS WANTED WOMAN ATTEMPTED TO BURN HERSELF TO DEATH AND WAS BROUGHT TO THE HOSPITAL.
THE LOCATION OF THE SUSPECT'S SUICIDE ATTEMPT.
SHE HAD DOUSED HERSELF IN GASOLINE AND SET HERSELF ON FIRE.
BUT I DOUBTED IF IT WAS ACTUALLY A SUICIDE ATTEMPT.
SHE WAS PROBABLY TRYING TO CREATE A NEW PROBLEM FOR HERSELF.

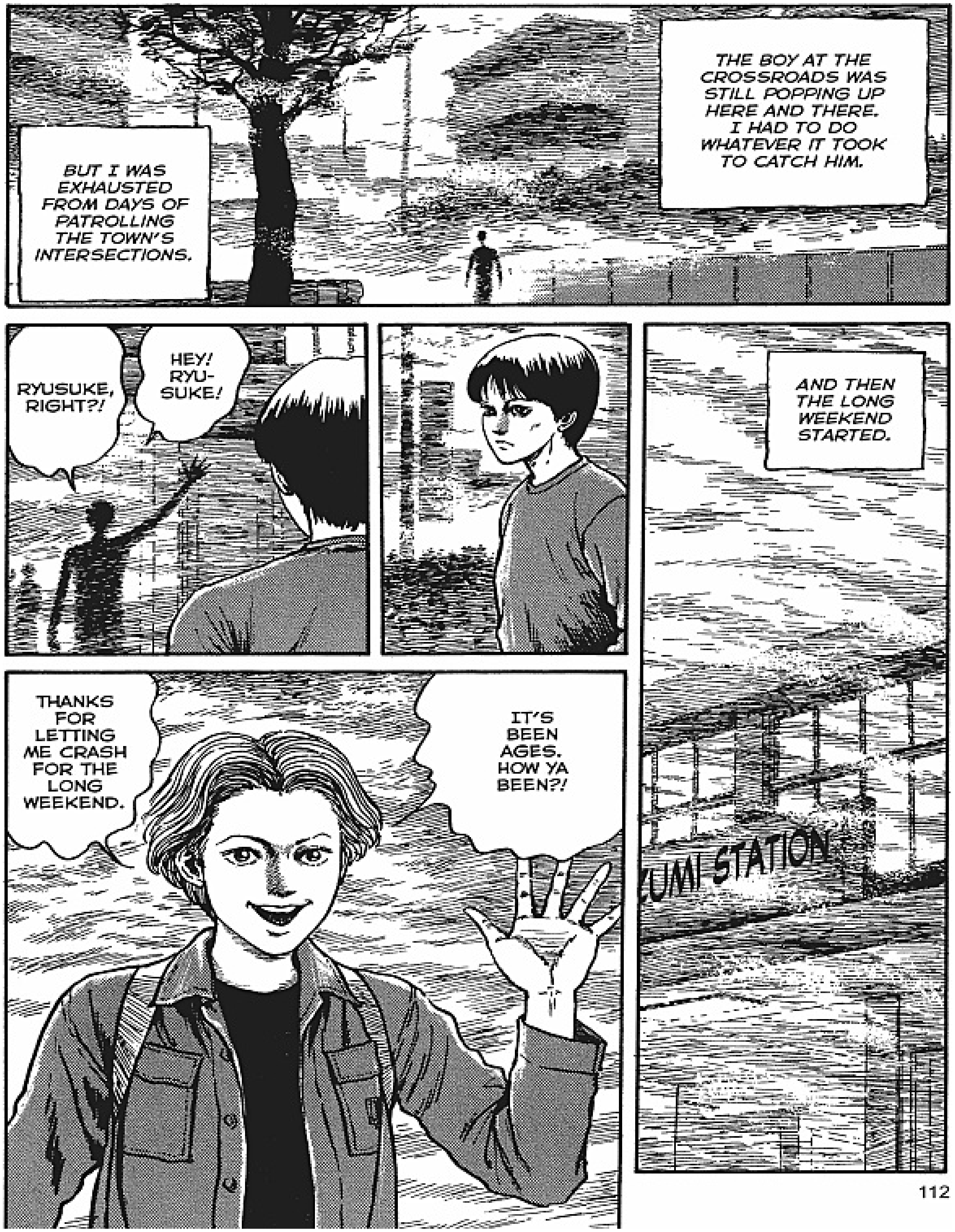

SHE HAD SERIOUS BURNS ALL OVER AND WAS IN CRITICAL CONDITION.
AND THAT WAS THE END OF HER STORY. WE WERE UNLIKELY TO EVER SEE HER AGAIN.
STILL, IT WAS THE BOY AT THE CROSSROADS WHO MADE HER LIKE THAT.
WHO IS HE?
!
KNOCK KNOCK
I TIMIDLY OPENED THE WINDOW.
BUT THERE WAS NOTHING OTHER THAN THE DARKNESS OF THE WARM NIGHT SPREADING OUT BELOW.
WAS I HEARING THINGS?

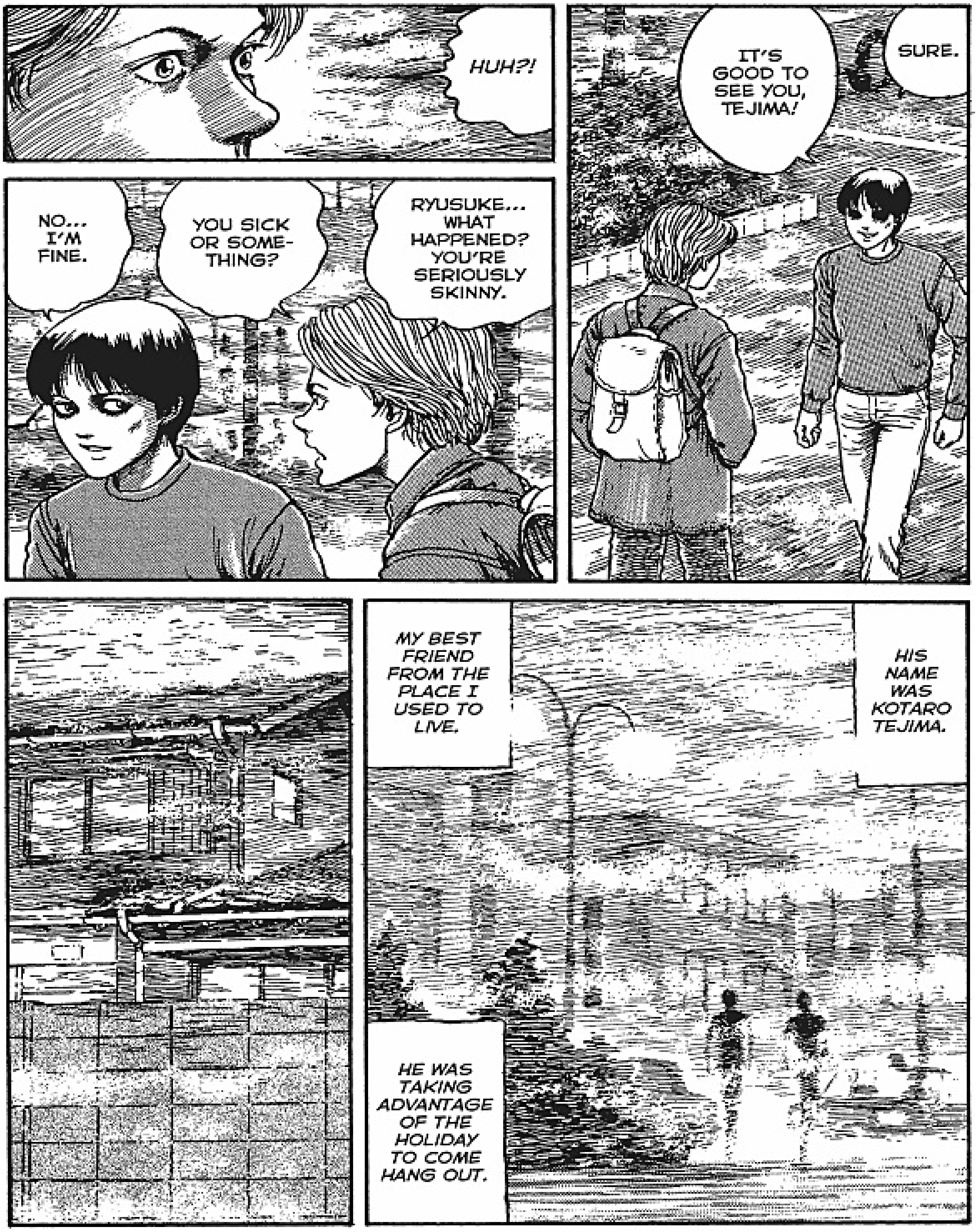
A WOMAN IN DISTRESS/END

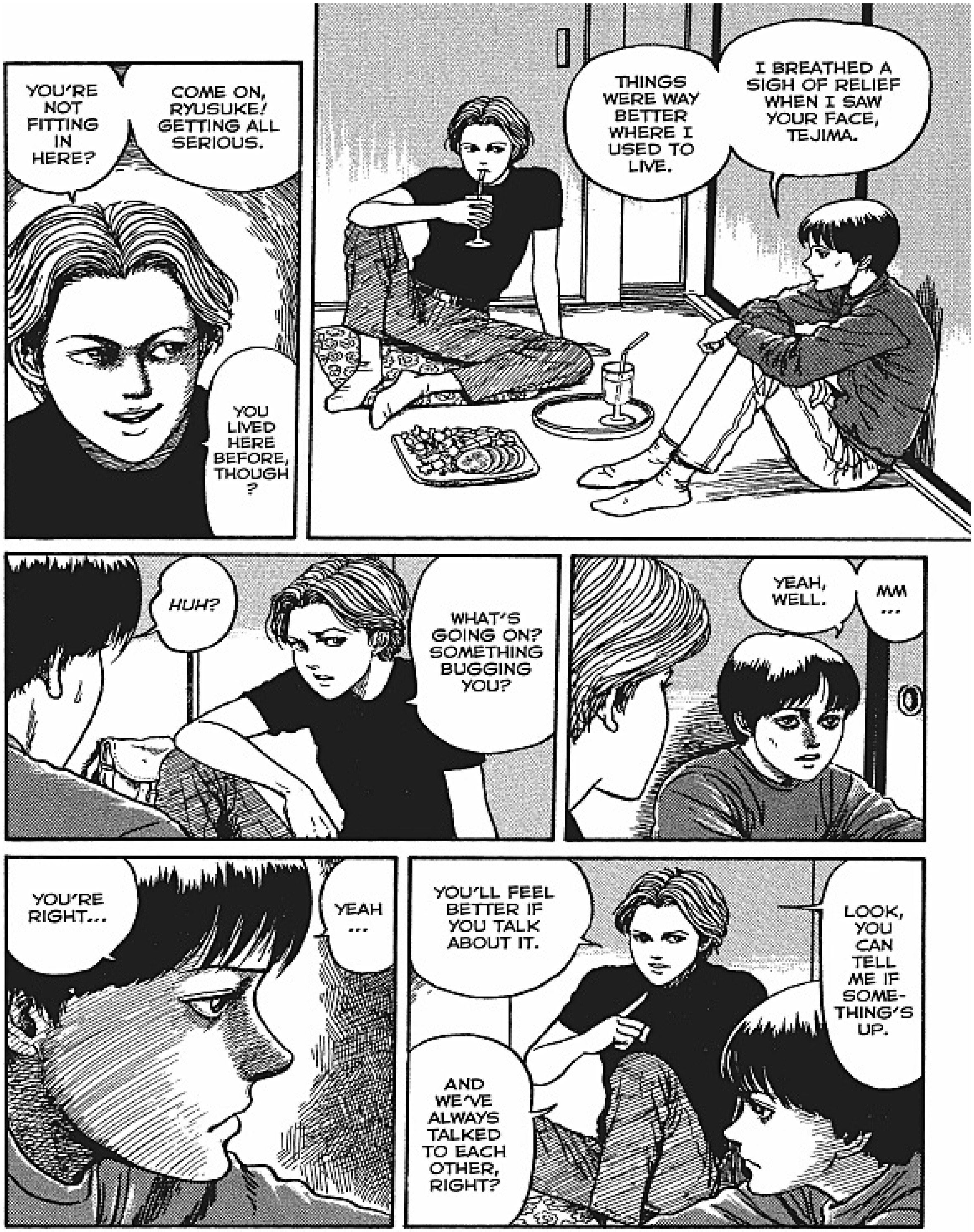

LOVESICKNESS
SHADOW
影（かげ）

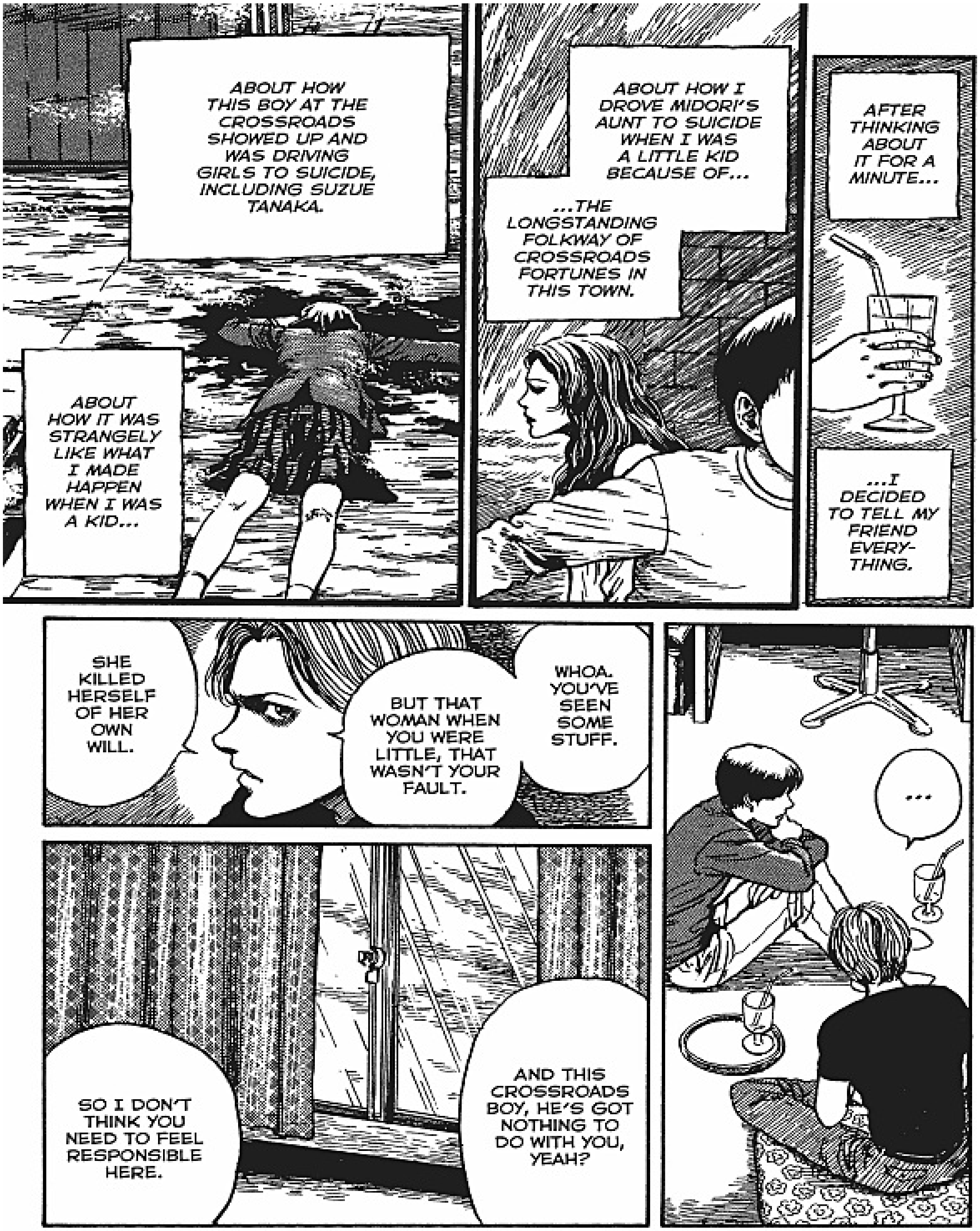

AT SCHOOL, I'D BEEN GIVEN THE NICKNAME "DEAD MAN."
BECAUSE I SEEMED SO LIFELESS, LIKE A DEAD PERSON.
WHAM
DON'T STAGGER AROUND LIKE THAT!
DEAD PEOPLE SHOULD STAY IN THEIR GRAVES!
WOBBLE

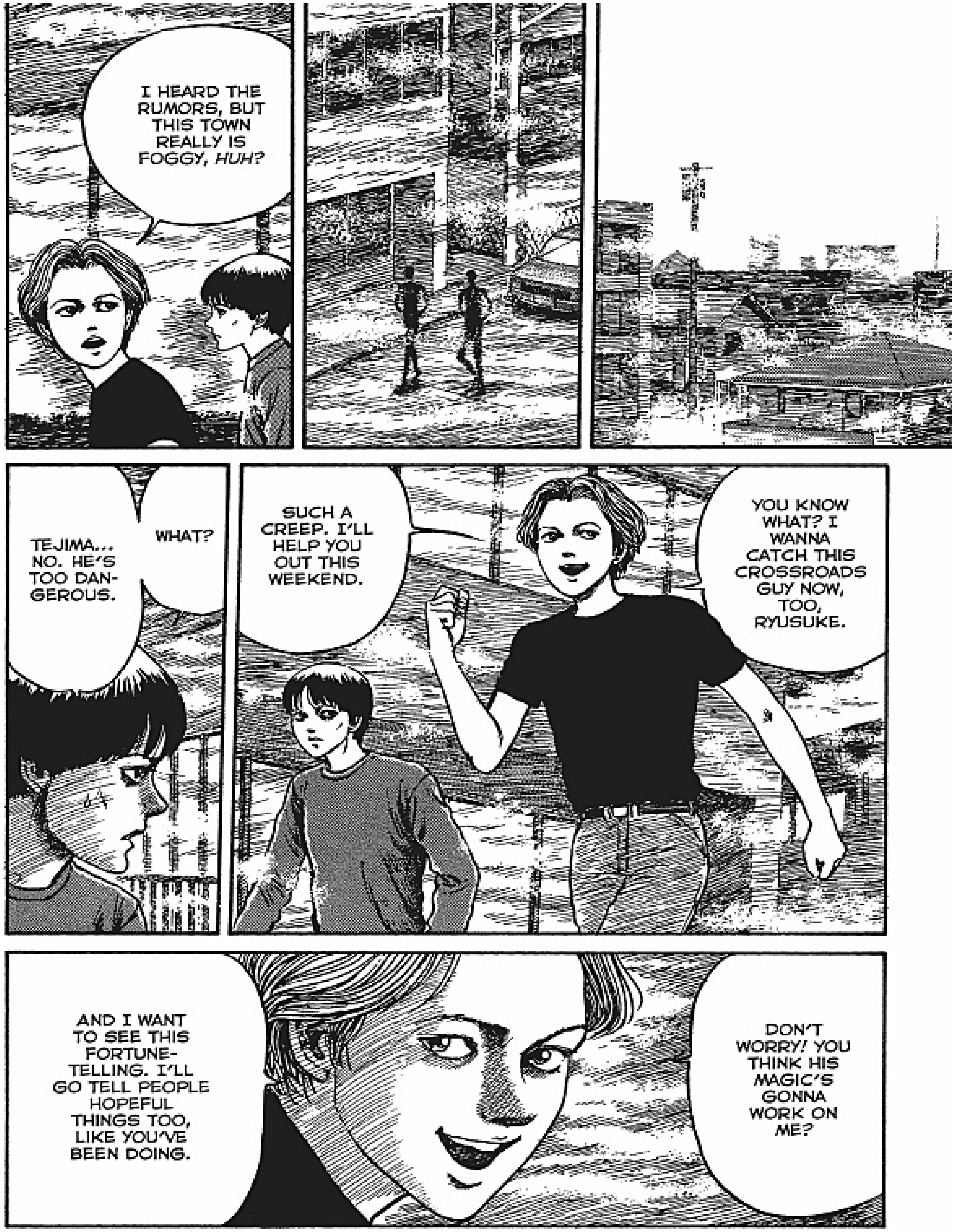

MIDORI WAS THE ONLY ONE WHO CARED ABOUT ME.
IT WAS MOSTLY PEOPLE WHO HATED ME BECAUSE OF SUZUE TANAKA'S SUICIDE.
AND I WAS STILL BEING HARASSED ON TOP OF THAT.
YOU SUCK. BRING BACK SUZUE TANAKA. GO TO HELL!
BUT I HAD TO AVOID HER.
MY FEELINGS FOR HER GREW STRONGER, BUT AT THE SAME TIME, I FELT LIKE I WAS LOSING MY MIND.
IT WAS HARD TO BREATHE.

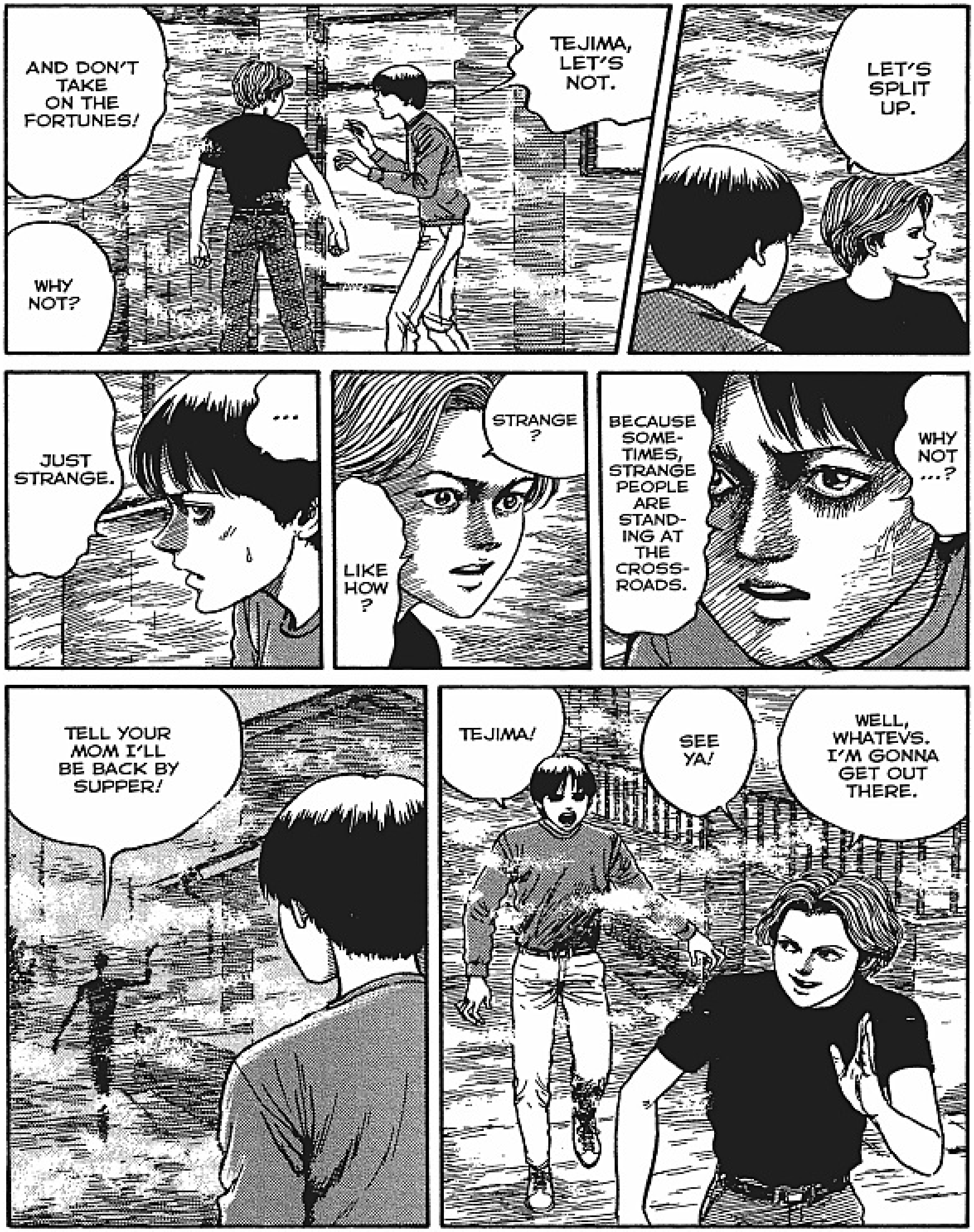

THE BOY AT THE CROSSROADS WAS STILL POPPING UP HERE AND THERE. I HAD TO DO WHATEVER IT TOOK TO CATCH HIM.
BUT I WAS EXHAUSTED FROM DAYS OF PATROLLING THE TOWN'S INTERSECTIONS.
AND THEN THE LONG WEEKEND STARTED.
ZUMI STATION
HEY! RYUSUKE!
RYUSUKE, RIGHT?!
IT'S BEEN AGES. HOW YA BEEN?!
THANKS FOR LETTING ME CRASH FOR THE LONG WEEKEND.

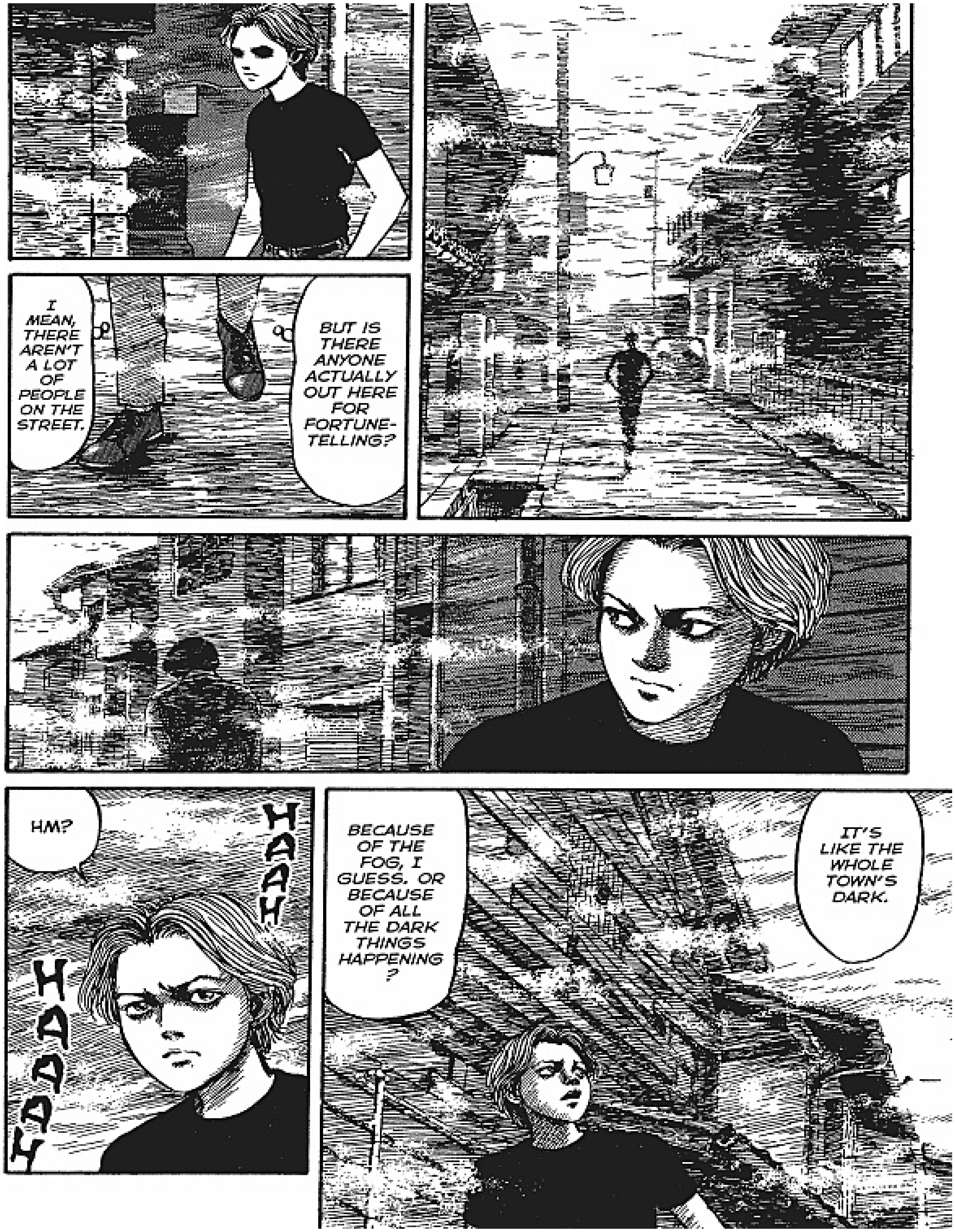

IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU, TEJIMA!
SURE.
HUH?!
RYUSUKE... WHAT HAPPENED? YOU'RE SERIOUSLY SKINNY.
YOU SICK OR SOMETHING?
NO... I'M FINE.
HIS NAME WAS KOTARO TEJIMA.
MY BEST FRIEND FROM THE PLACE I USED TO LIVE.
HE WAS TAKING ADVANTAGE OF THE HOLIDAY TO COME HANG OUT.

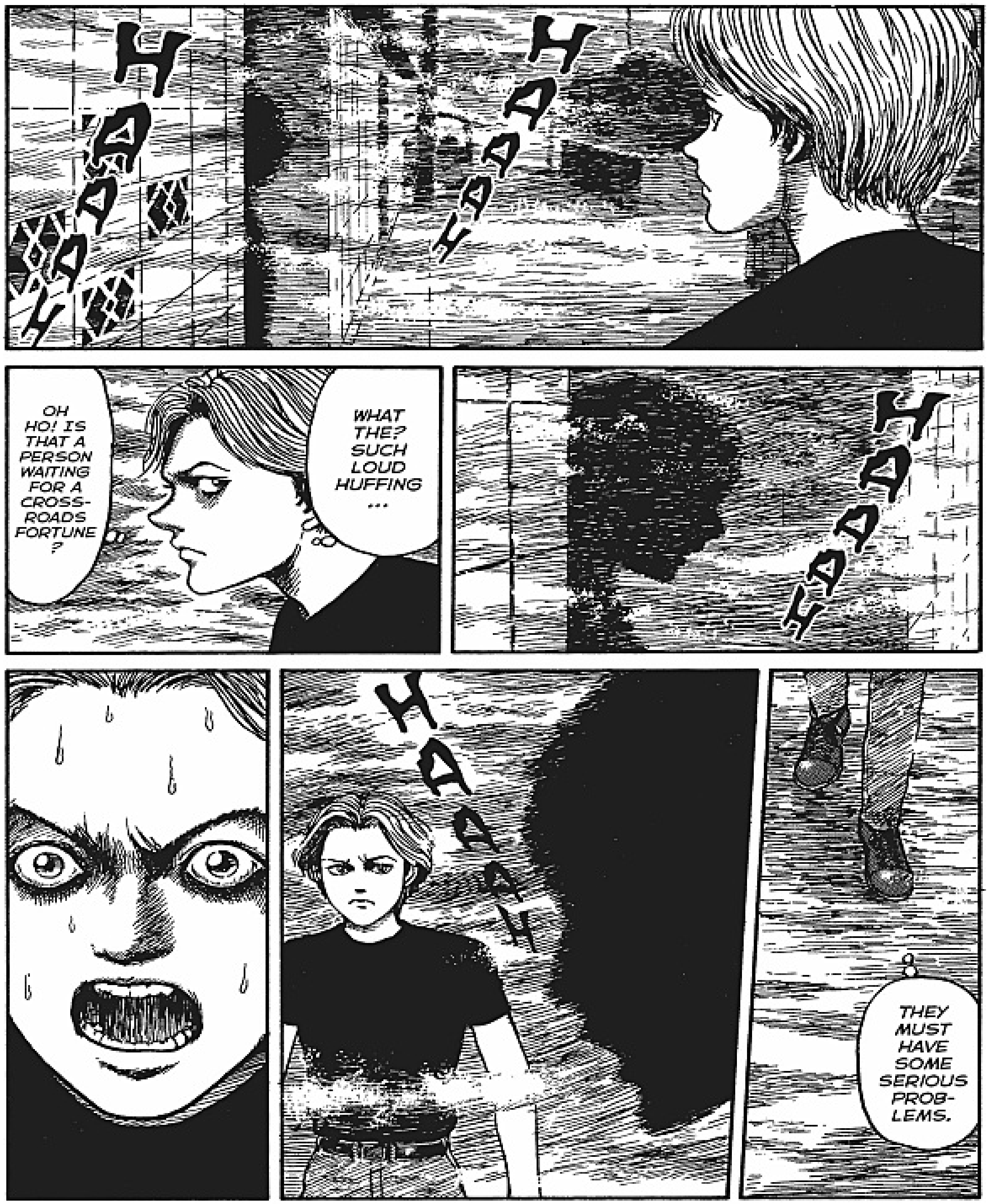

I BREATHED A SIGH OF RELIEF WHEN I SAW YOUR FACE, TEJIMA.
THINGS WERE WAY BETTER WHERE I USED TO LIVE.
COME ON, RYUSUKE! GETTING ALL SERIOUS.
YOU'RE NOT FITTING IN HERE?
YOU LIVED HERE BEFORE, THOUGH?
MM...
YEAH, WELL.
WHAT'S GOING ON? SOMETHING BUGGING YOU?
HUH?
LOOK, YOU CAN TELL ME IF SOMETHING'S UP.
YOU'LL FEEL BETTER IF YOU TALK ABOUT IT.
AND WE'VE ALWAYS TALKED TO EACH OTHER, RIGHT?
YEAH...
YOU'RE RIGHT...

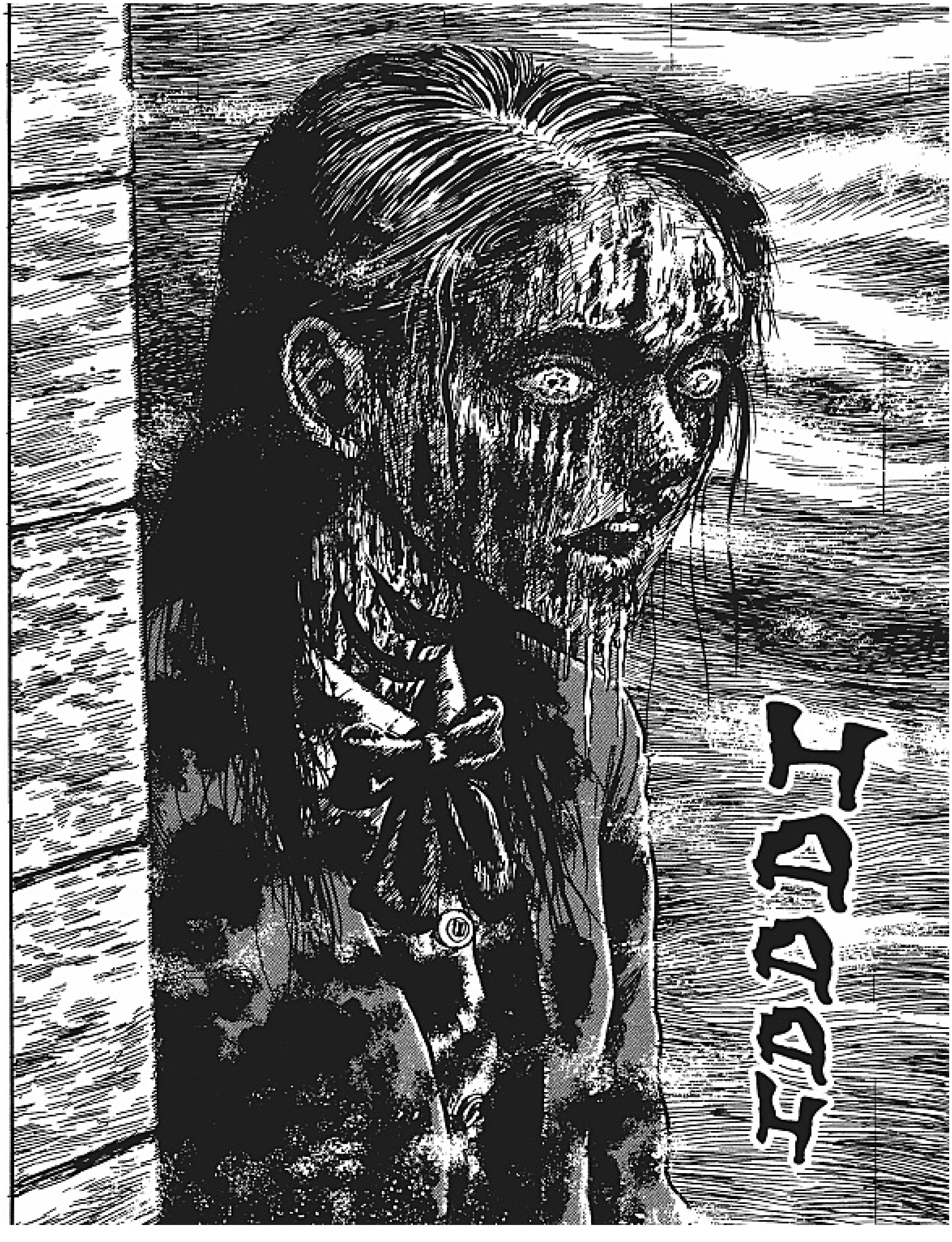

ABOUT HOW THIS BOY AT THE CROSSROADS SHOWED UP AND WAS DRIVING GIRLS TO SUICIDE, INCLUDING SUZUE TANAKA.
ABOUT HOW IT WAS STRANGELY LIKE WHAT I MADE HAPPEN WHEN I WAS A KID...
ABOUT HOW I DROVE MIDORI'S AUNT TO SUICIDE WHEN I WAS A LITTLE KID BECAUSE OF...
...THE LONGSTANDING FOLKWAY OF CROSSROADS FORTUNES IN THIS TOWN.
AFTER THINKING ABOUT IT FOR A MINUTE...
...I DECIDED TO TELL MY FRIEND EVERYTHING.
WHOA. YOU'VE SEEN SOME STUFF.
BUT THAT WOMAN WHEN YOU WERE LITTLE, THAT WASN'T YOUR FAULT.
SHE KILLED HERSELF OF HER OWN WILL.
...
AND THIS CROSSROADS BOY, HE'S GOT NOTHING TO DO WITH YOU, YEAH?
SO I DON'T THINK YOU NEED TO FEEL RESPONSIBLE HERE.

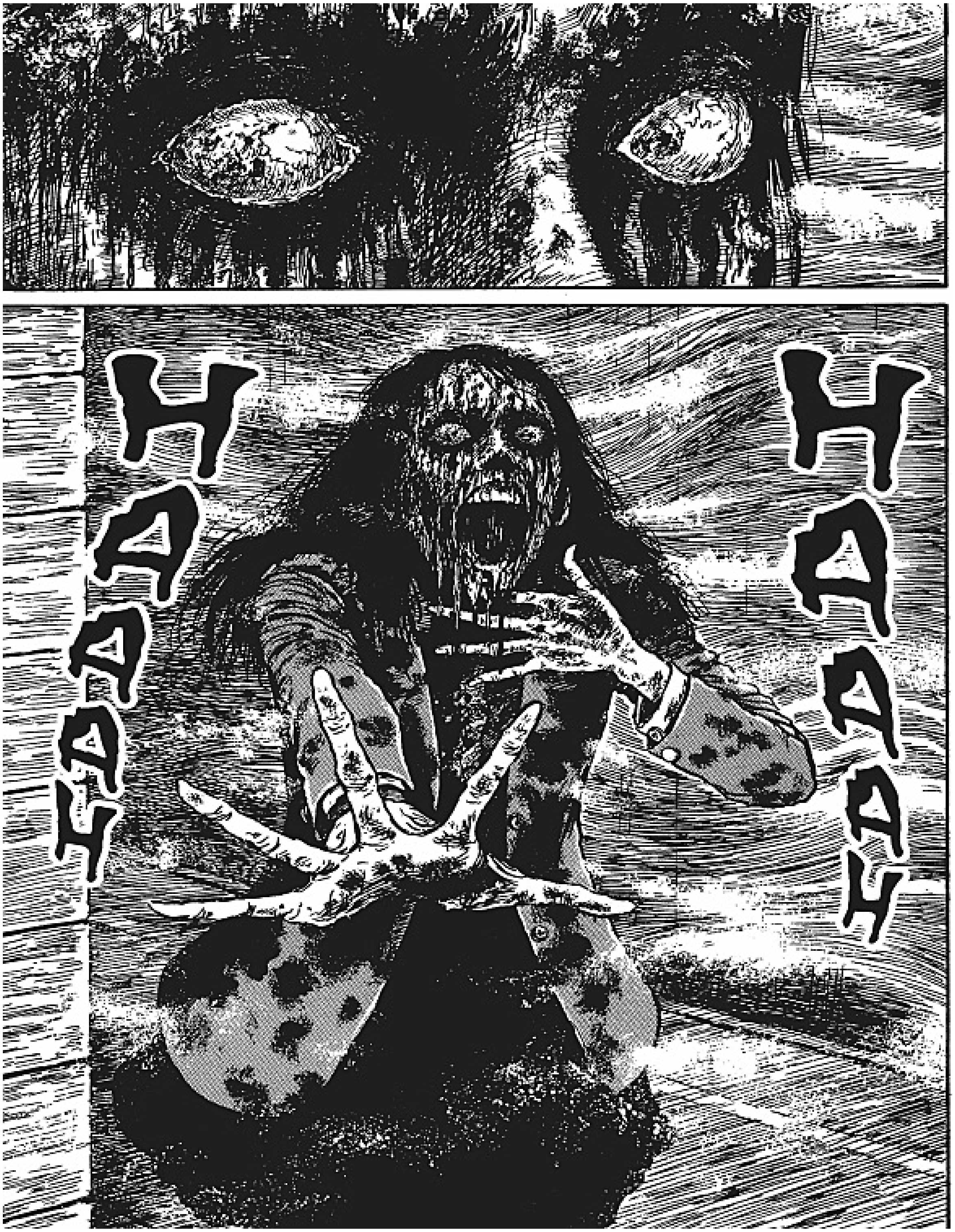

I HEARD THE RUMORS, BUT THIS TOWN REALLY IS FOGGY, *HUH*?
YOU KNOW WHAT? I WANNA CATCH THIS CROSSROADS GUY NOW, TOO, RYUSUKE.
SUCH A CREEP. I'LL HELP YOU OUT THIS WEEKEND.
WHAT?
TEJIMA... NO. HE'S TOO DANGEROUS.
DON'T WORRY! YOU THINK HIS MAGIC'S GONNA WORK ON ME?
AND I WANT TO SEE THIS FORTUNE-TELLING. I'LL GO TELL PEOPLE HOPEFUL THINGS TOO, LIKE YOU'VE BEEN DOING.

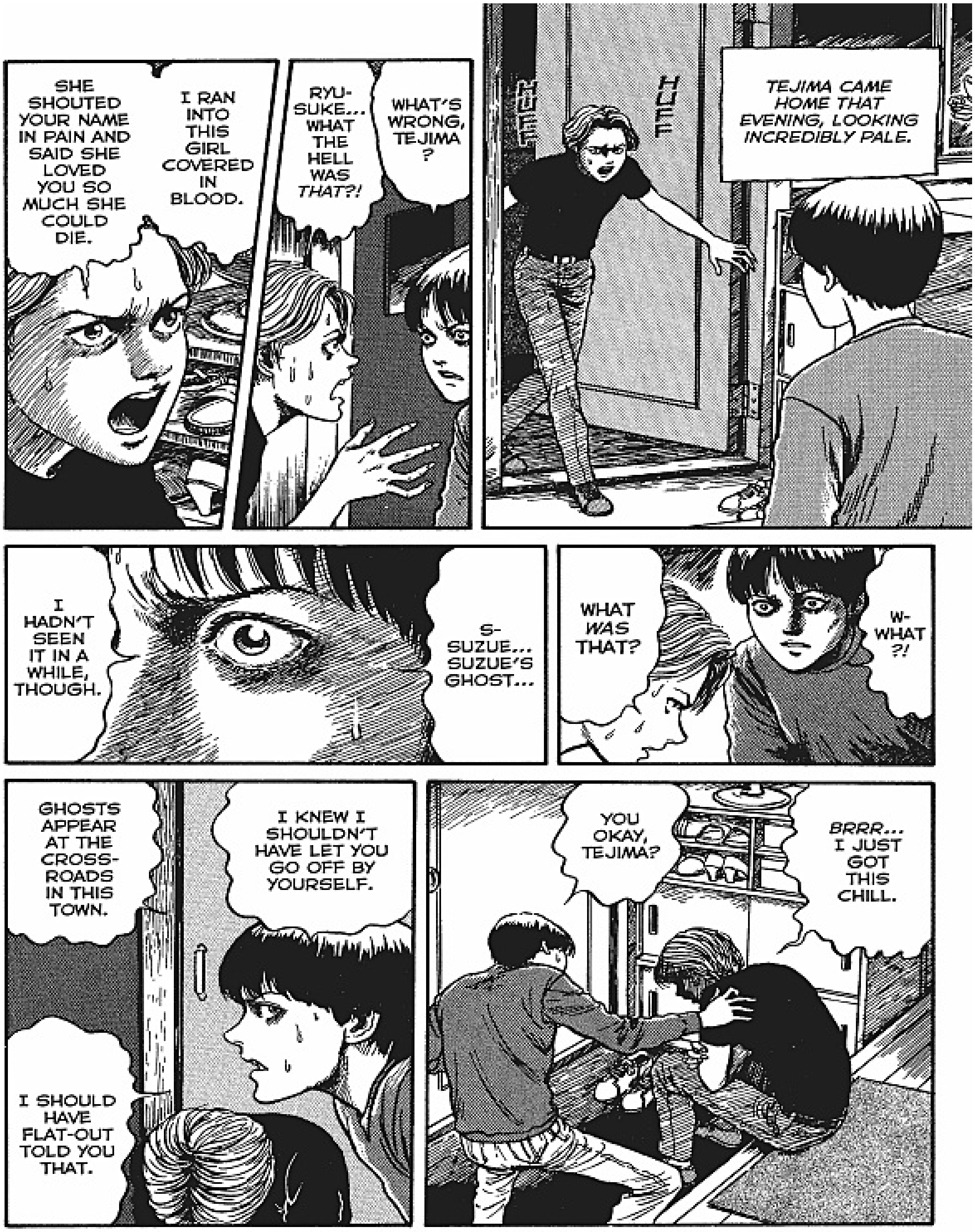

LET'S SPLIT UP.
TEJIMA, LET'S NOT.
AND DON'T TAKE ON THE FORTUNES!
WHY NOT?
WHY NOT ...?
BECAUSE SOMETIMES, STRANGE PEOPLE ARE STANDING AT THE CROSSROADS.
STRANGE?
LIKE HOW?
...
JUST STRANGE.
WELL, WHATEVS. I'M GONNA GET OUT THERE.
SEE YA!
TEJIMA!
TELL YOUR MOM I'LL BE BACK BY SUPPER!

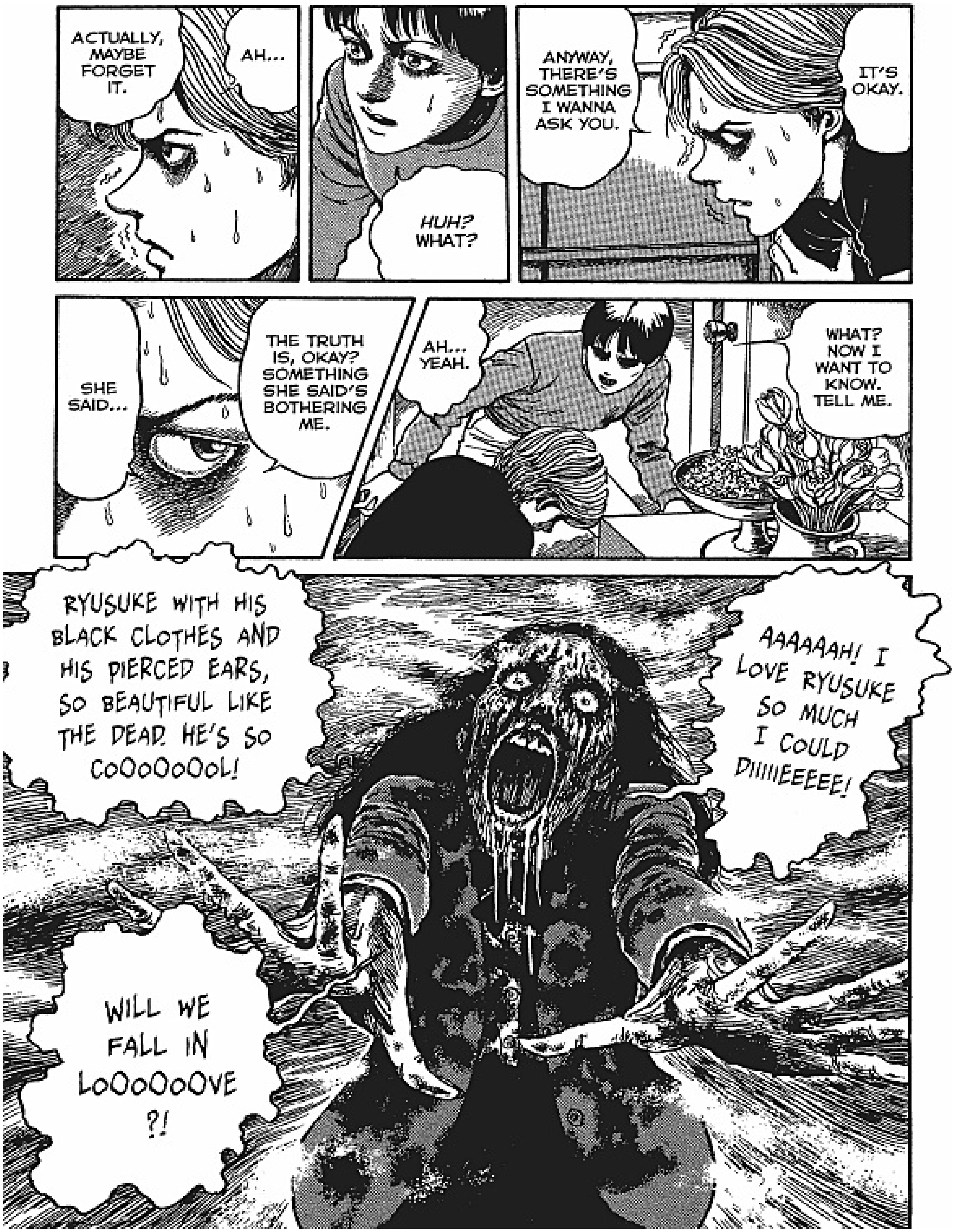

BUT IS THERE ANYONE ACTUALLY OUT HERE FOR FORTUNE-TELLING?
I MEAN, THERE AREN'T A LOT OF PEOPLE ON THE STREET.
IT'S LIKE THE WHOLE TOWN'S DARK.
BECAUSE OF THE FOG, I GUESS. OR BECAUSE OF ALL THE DARK THINGS HAPPENING?
HAAAH
HAAAH
HM?

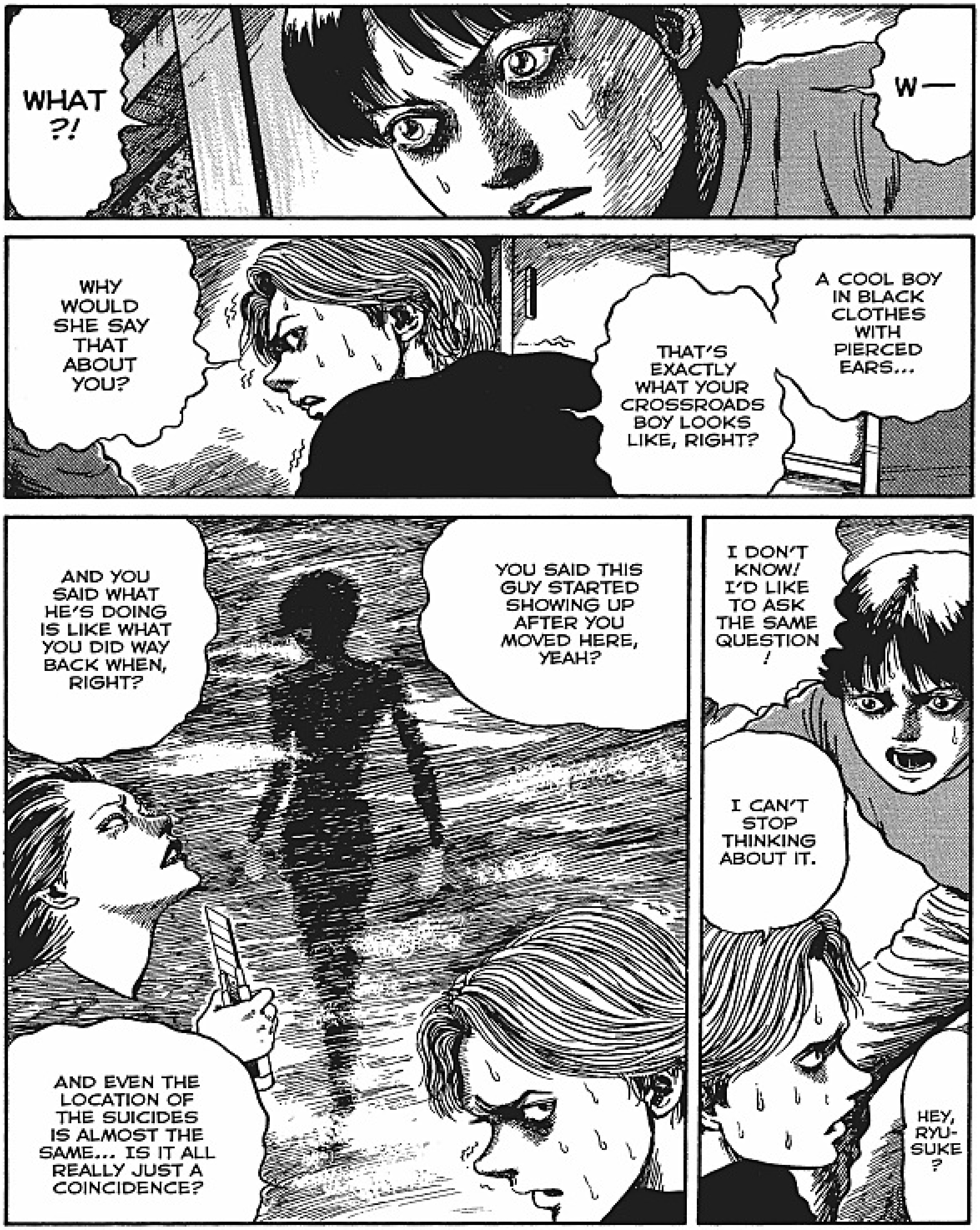

HAAAAH
HAAAAH
HAAAAH
WHAT THE? SUCH LOUD HUFFING...
OH HO! IS THAT A PERSON WAITING FOR A CROSSROADS FORTUNE?
THEY MUST HAVE SOME SERIOUS PROBLEMS.
HAAAAH

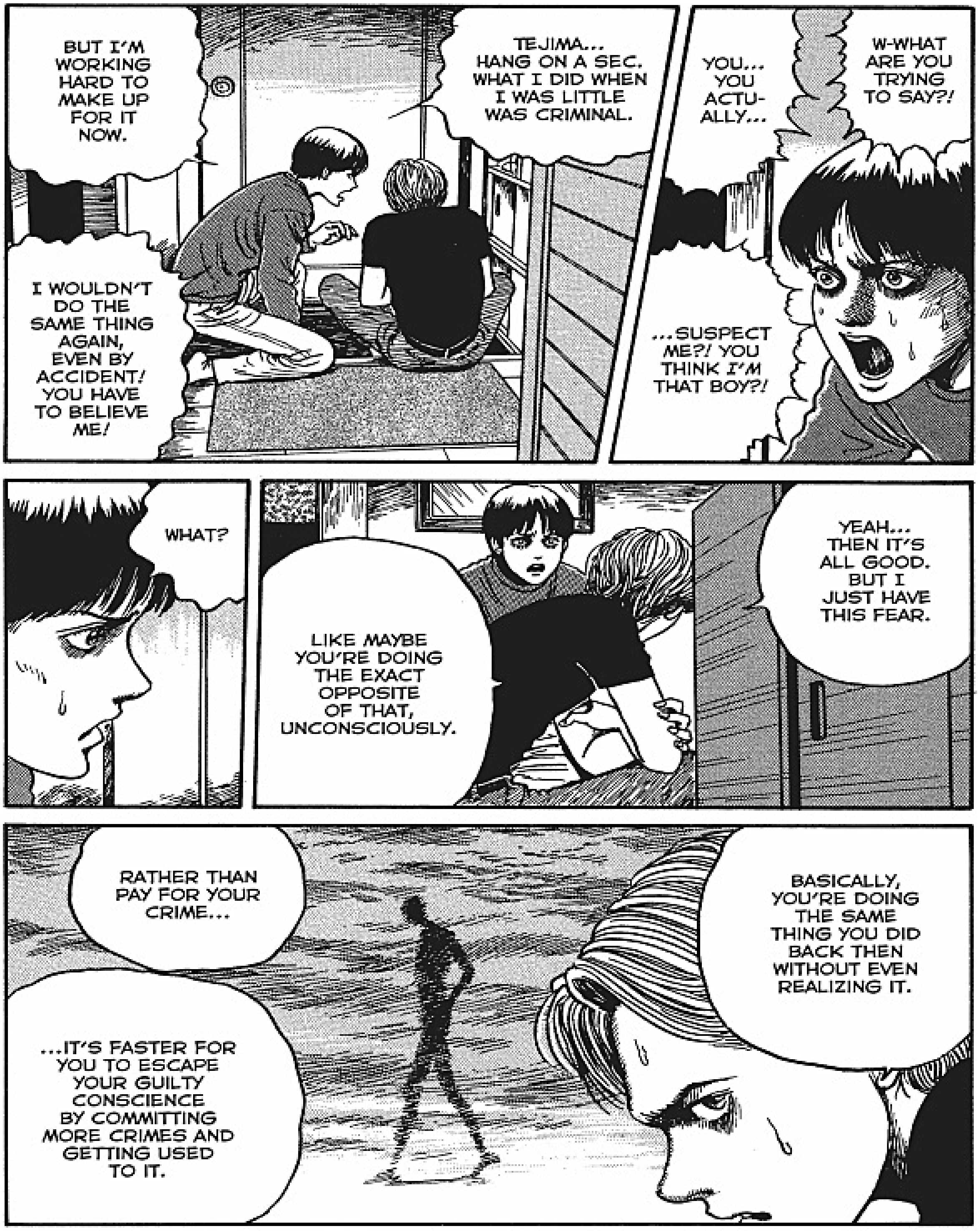

HAAAH

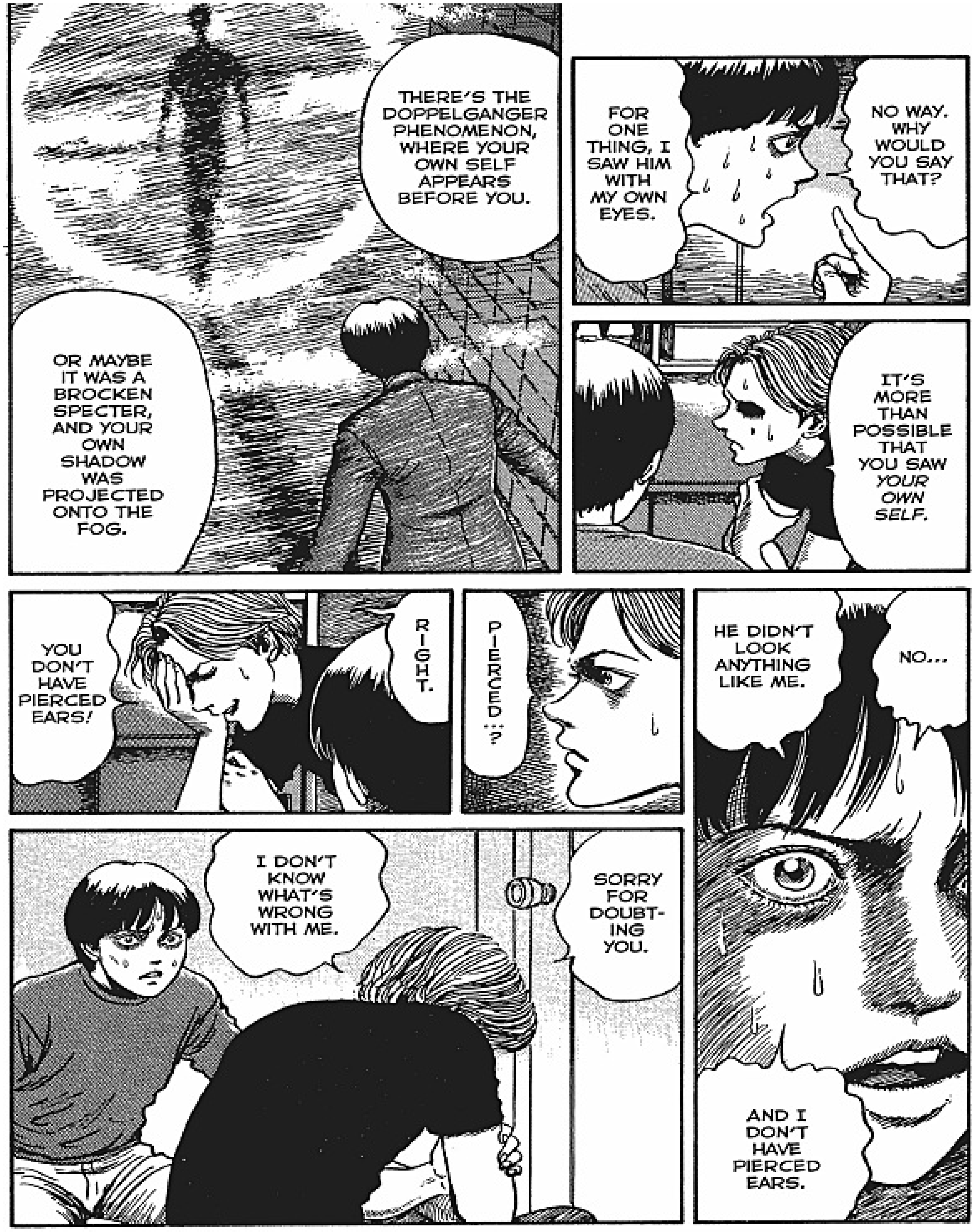

HAAAH
HAAAH

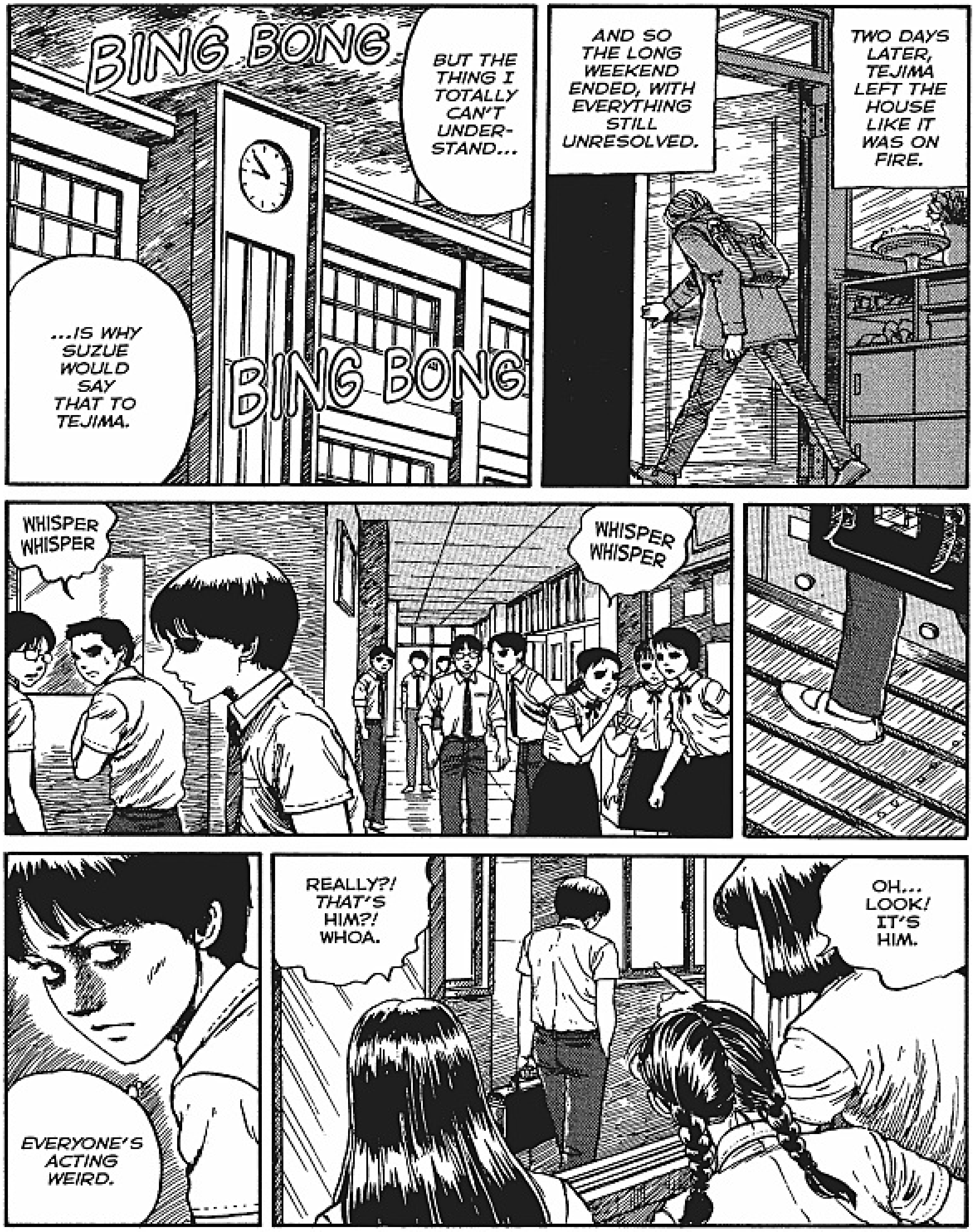

TEJIMA CAME HOME THAT EVENING, LOOKING INCREDIBLY PALE.
HUFF
HUFF
WHAT'S WRONG, TEJIMA?
RYU-SUKE... WHAT THE HELL WAS *THAT?!*
I RAN INTO THIS GIRL COVERED IN BLOOD.
SHE SHOUTED YOUR NAME IN PAIN AND SAID SHE LOVED YOU SO MUCH SHE COULD DIE.
W-WHAT?!
WHAT *WAS* THAT?
S-SUZUE... SUZUE'S GHOST...
I HADN'T SEEN IT IN A WHILE, THOUGH.
BRRR... I JUST GOT THIS CHILL.
YOU OKAY, TEJIMA?
I KNEW I SHOULDN'T HAVE LET YOU GO OFF BY YOURSELF.
GHOSTS APPEAR AT THE CROSS-ROADS IN THIS TOWN.
I SHOULD HAVE FLAT-OUT TOLD YOU THAT.

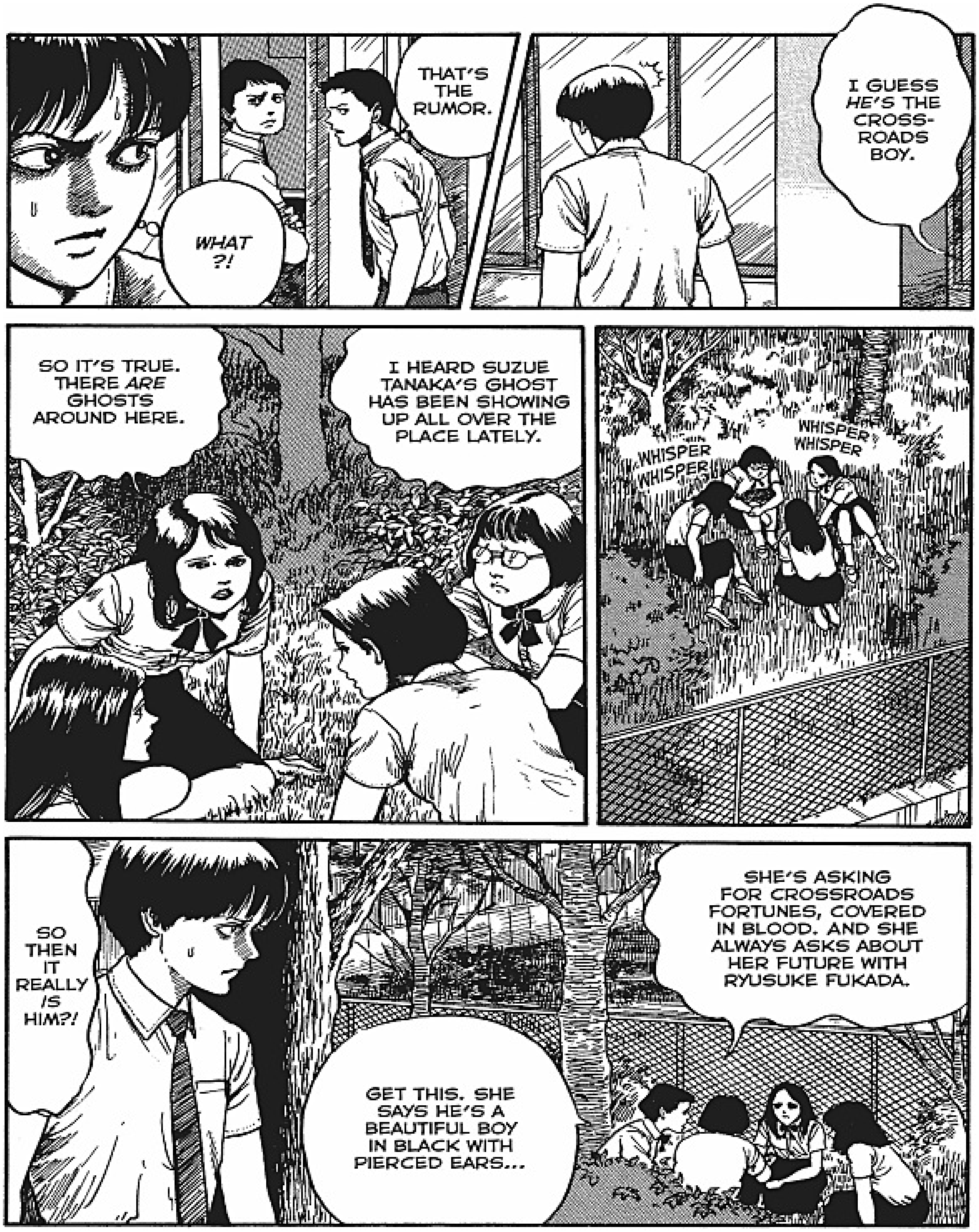

IT'S OKAY.
ANYWAY, THERE'S SOMETHING I WANNA ASK YOU.
HUH? WHAT?
AH...
ACTUALLY, MAYBE FORGET IT.
WHAT? NOW I WANT TO KNOW. TELL ME.
AH... YEAH.
THE TRUTH IS, OKAY? SOMETHING SHE SAID'S BOTHERING ME.
SHE SAID...
AAAAAAH! I LOVE RYUSUKE SO MUCH I COULD DIIIIEEEEE!
RYUSUKE WITH HIS BLACK CLOTHES AND HIS PIERCED EARS, SO BEAUTIFUL LIKE THE DEAD. HE'S SO COOOOOOOL!
WILL WE FALL IN LOOOOOOVE?!

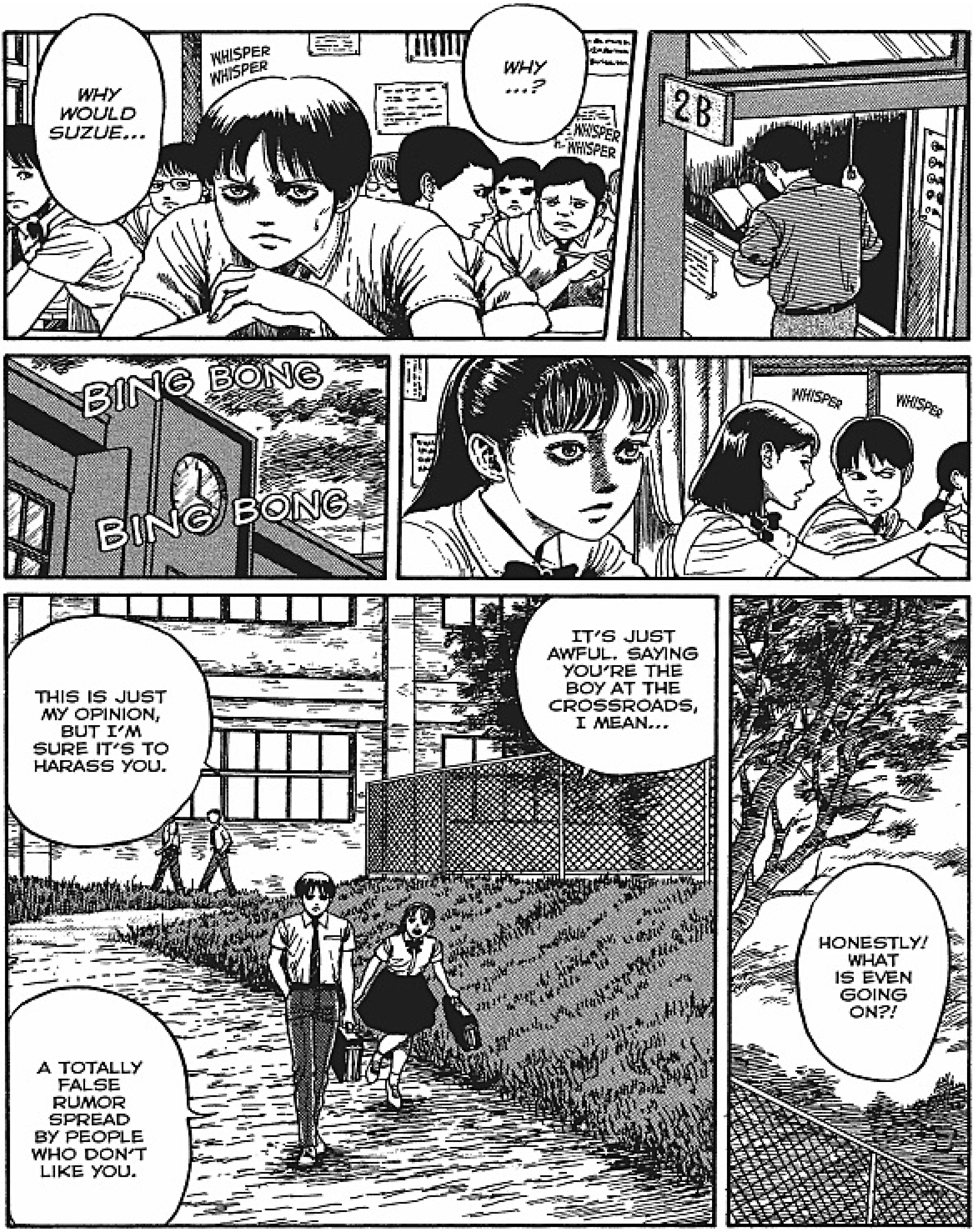

W—
WHAT ?!
A COOL BOY IN BLACK CLOTHES WITH PIERCED EARS...
THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT YOUR CROSSROADS BOY LOOKS LIKE, RIGHT?
WHY WOULD SHE SAY THAT ABOUT YOU?
I DON'T KNOW! I'D LIKE TO ASK THE SAME QUESTION!
I CAN'T STOP THINKING ABOUT IT.
HEY, RYUSUKE?
YOU SAID THIS GUY STARTED SHOWING UP AFTER YOU MOVED HERE, YEAH?
AND YOU SAID WHAT HE'S DOING IS LIKE WHAT YOU DID WAY BACK WHEN, RIGHT?
AND EVEN THE LOCATION OF THE SUICIDES IS ALMOST THE SAME... IS IT ALL REALLY JUST A COINCIDENCE?

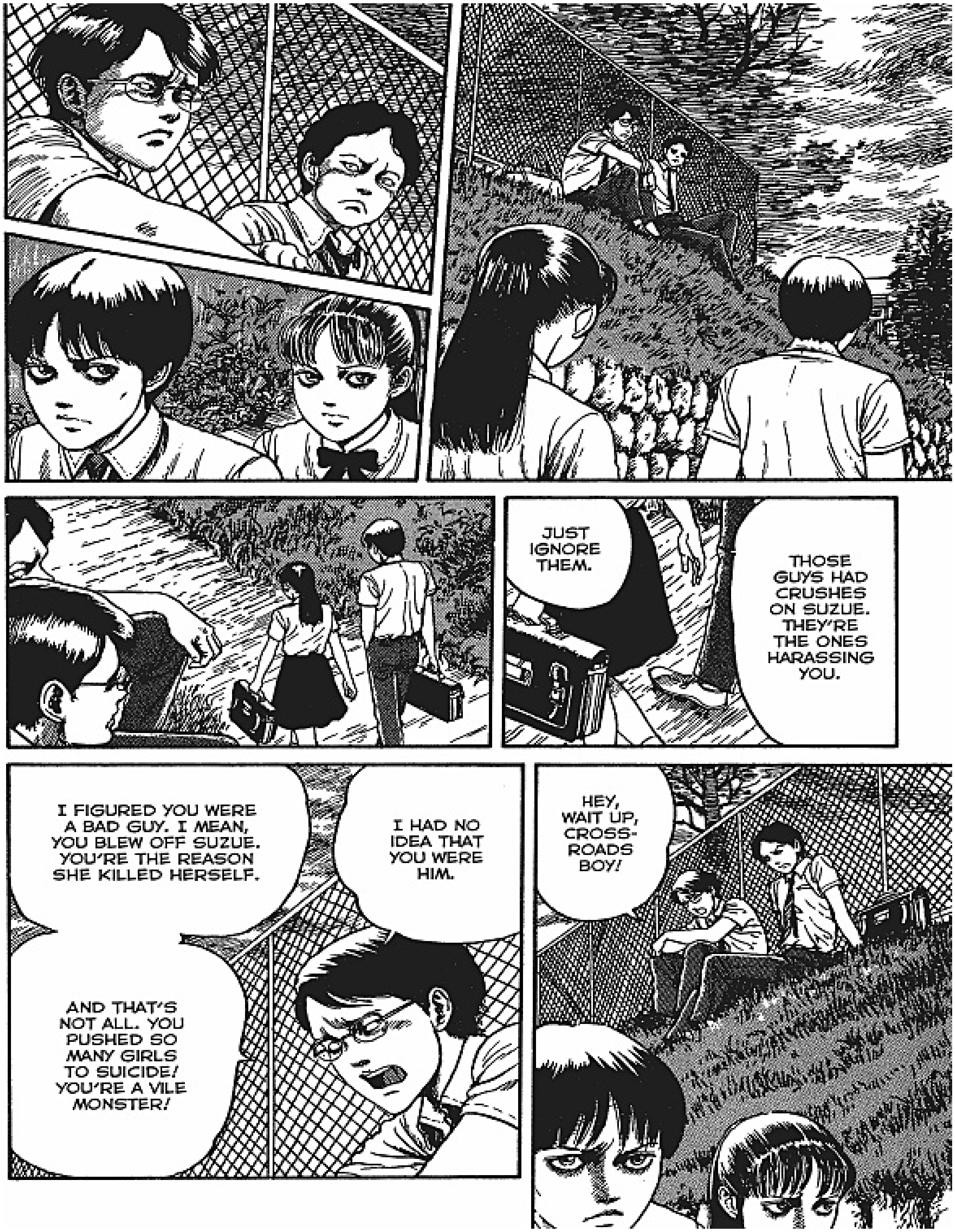

W-WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO SAY?!
YOU... YOU ACTUALLY...
...SUSPECT ME?! YOU THINK *I'M* THAT BOY?!
TEJIMA... HANG ON A SEC. WHAT I DID WHEN I WAS LITTLE WAS CRIMINAL.
BUT I'M WORKING HARD TO MAKE UP FOR IT NOW.
I WOULDN'T DO THE SAME THING AGAIN, EVEN BY ACCIDENT! YOU HAVE TO BELIEVE ME!
YEAH... THEN IT'S ALL GOOD. BUT I JUST HAVE THIS FEAR.
LIKE MAYBE YOU'RE DOING THE EXACT OPPOSITE OF THAT, UNCONSCIOUSLY.
WHAT?
BASICALLY, YOU'RE DOING THE SAME THING YOU DID BACK THEN WITHOUT EVEN REALIZING IT.
RATHER THAN PAY FOR YOUR CRIME...
...IT'S FASTER FOR YOU TO ESCAPE YOUR GUILTY CONSCIENCE BY COMMITTING MORE CRIMES AND GETTING USED TO IT.

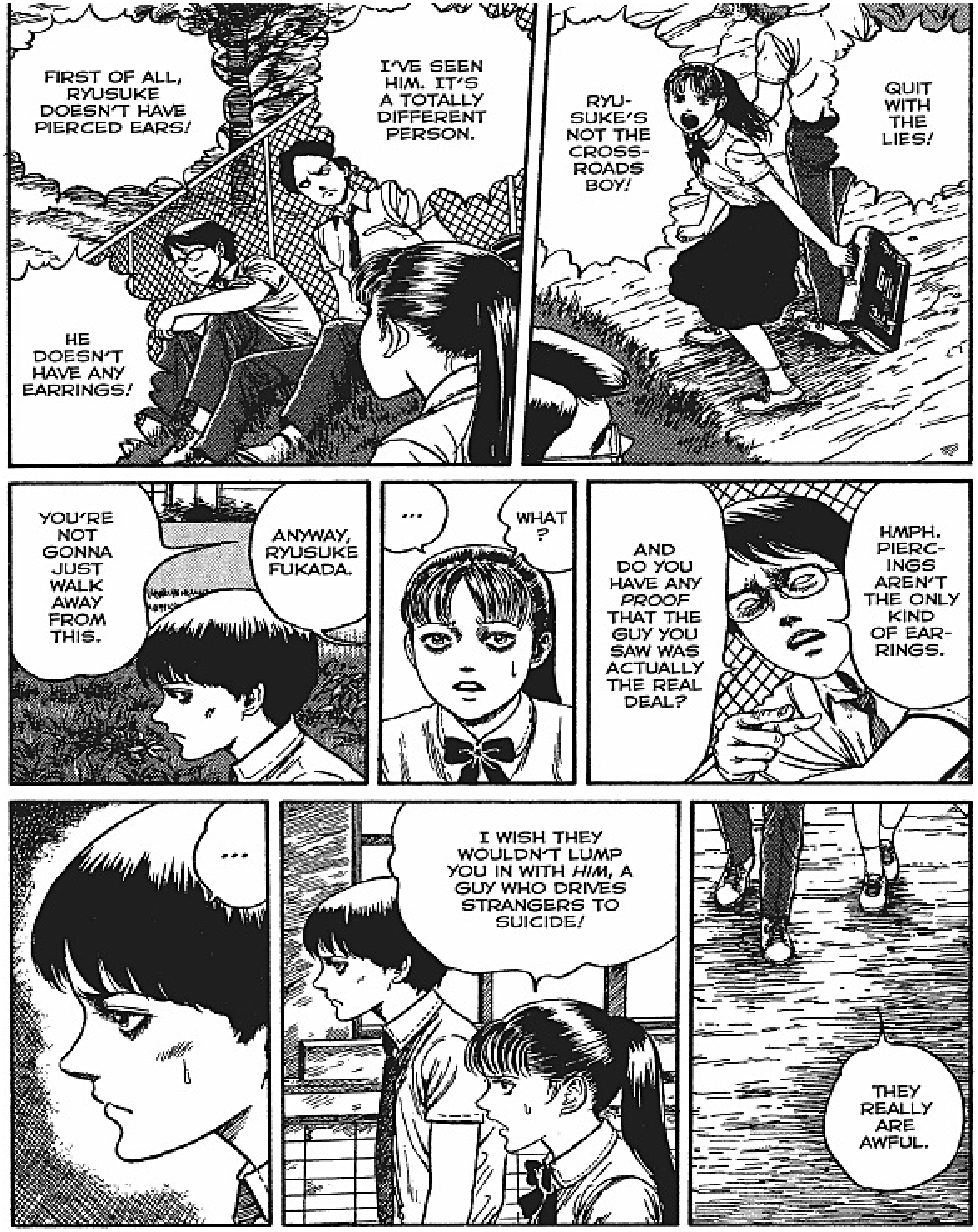

NO WAY. WHY WOULD YOU SAY THAT?
FOR ONE THING, I SAW HIM WITH *MY OWN* EYES.
IT'S MORE THAN POSSIBLE THAT YOU SAW *YOUR OWN SELF.*
THERE'S THE DOPPELGANGER PHENOMENON, WHERE YOUR OWN SELF APPEARS BEFORE YOU.
OR MAYBE IT WAS A BROCKEN SPECTER, AND YOUR OWN SHADOW WAS PROJECTED ONTO THE FOG.
NO...
HE DIDN'T LOOK ANYTHING LIKE ME.
AND I DON'T HAVE PIERCED EARS.
PIERCED...?
RIGHT.
YOU DON'T HAVE PIERCED EARS!
SORRY FOR DOUBTING YOU.
I DON'T KNOW WHAT'S WRONG WITH ME.

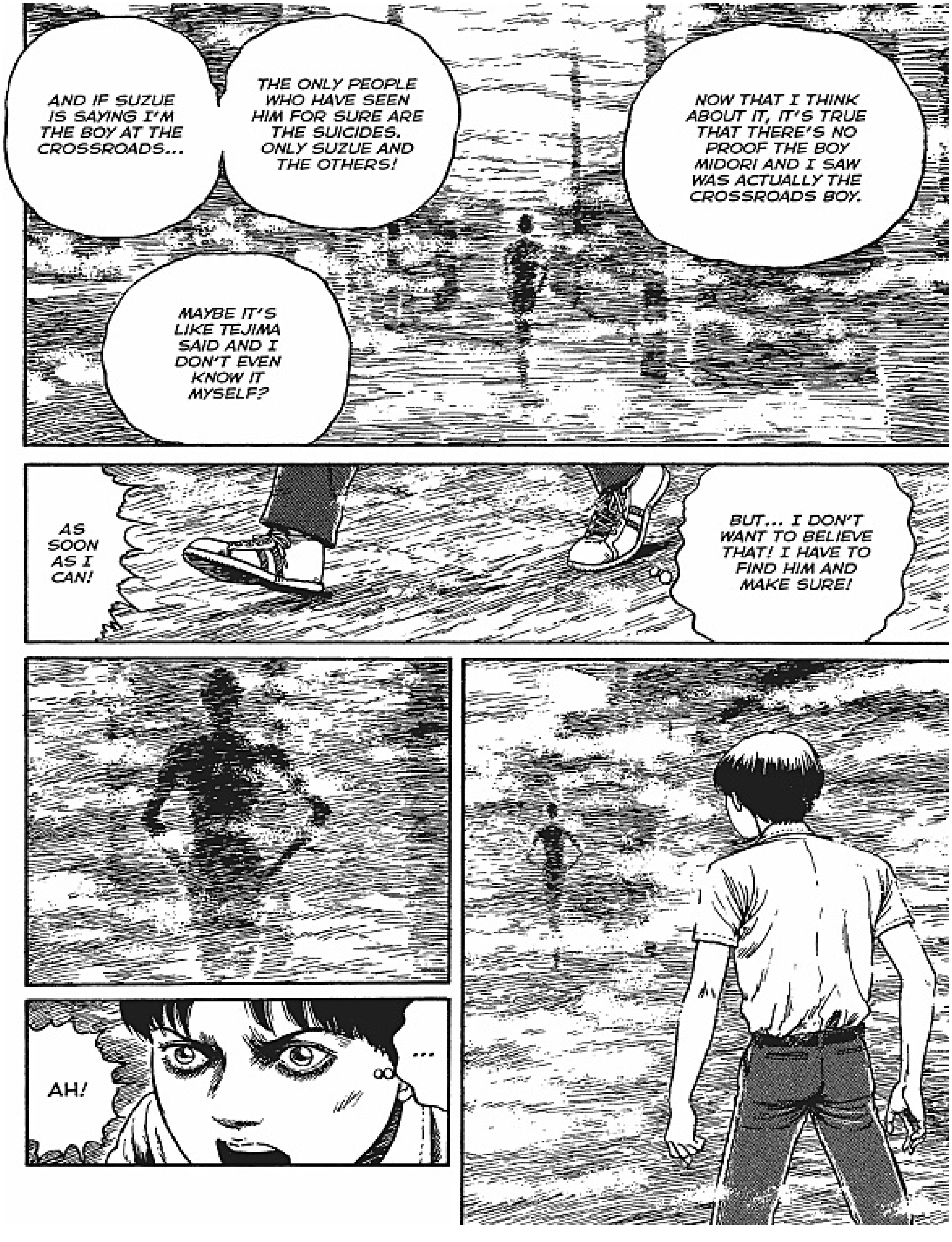

BING BONG
BUT THE THING I TOTALLY CAN'T UNDERSTAND...
BING BONG
...IS WHY SUZUE WOULD SAY THAT TO TEJIMA.
AND SO THE LONG WEEKEND ENDED, WITH EVERYTHING STILL UNRESOLVED.
TWO DAYS LATER, TEJIMA LEFT THE HOUSE LIKE IT WAS ON FIRE.
WHISPER WHISPER
WHISPER WHISPER
EVERYONE'S ACTING WEIRD.
OH... LOOK! IT'S HIM.
REALLY?! THAT'S HIM?! WHOA.

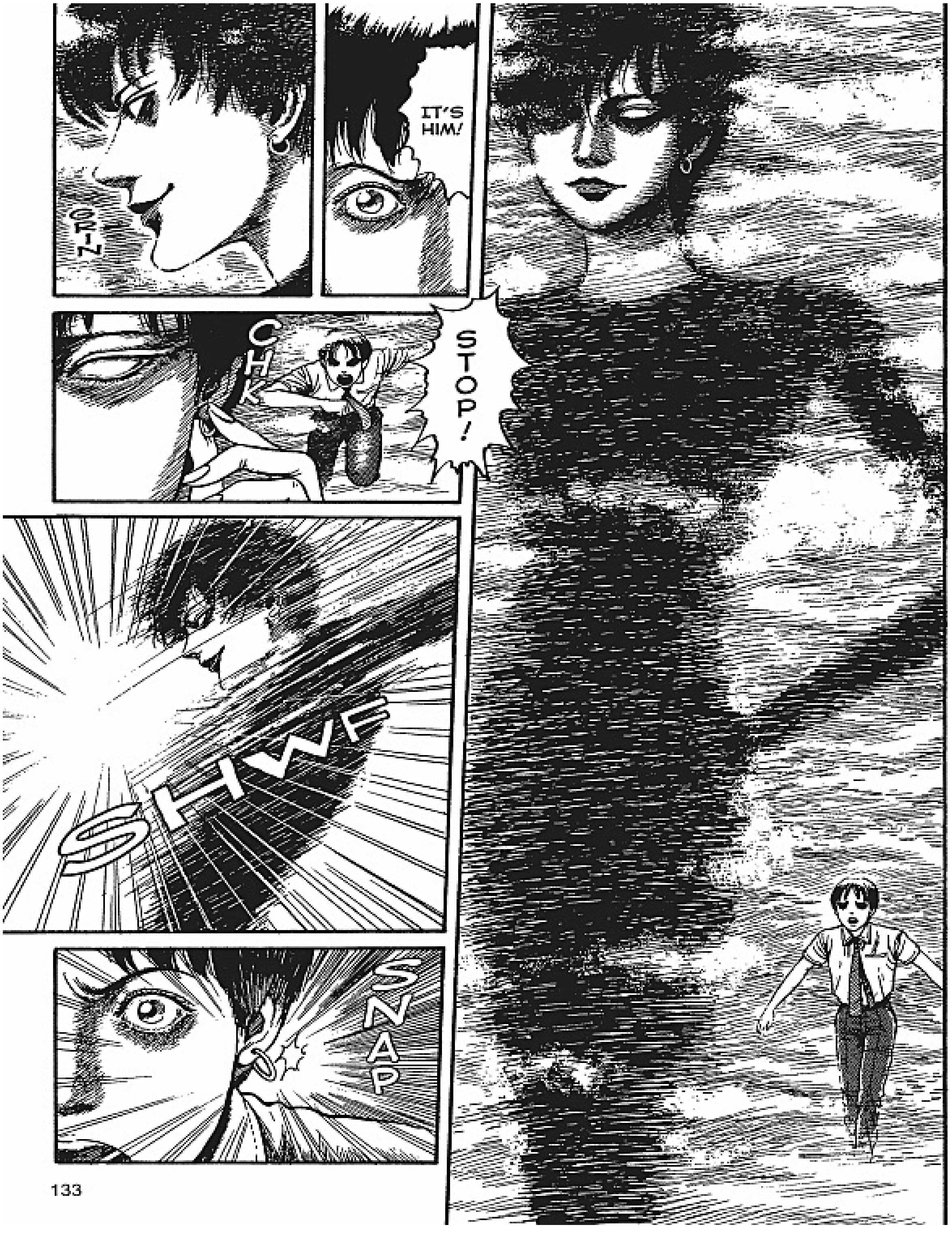

I GUESS *HE'S* THE CROSSROADS BOY.
THAT'S THE RUMOR.
WHAT ?!
I HEARD SUZUE TANAKA'S GHOST HAS BEEN SHOWING UP ALL OVER THE PLACE LATELY.
SO IT'S TRUE. THERE *ARE* GHOSTS AROUND HERE.
WHISPER WHISPER
WHISPER WHISPER
SHE'S ASKING FOR CROSSROADS FORTUNES, COVERED IN BLOOD. AND SHE ALWAYS ASKS ABOUT HER FUTURE WITH RYUSUKE FUKADA.
GET THIS. SHE SAYS HE'S A BEAUTIFUL BOY IN BLACK WITH PIERCED EARS...
SO THEN IT REALLY *IS* HIM?!

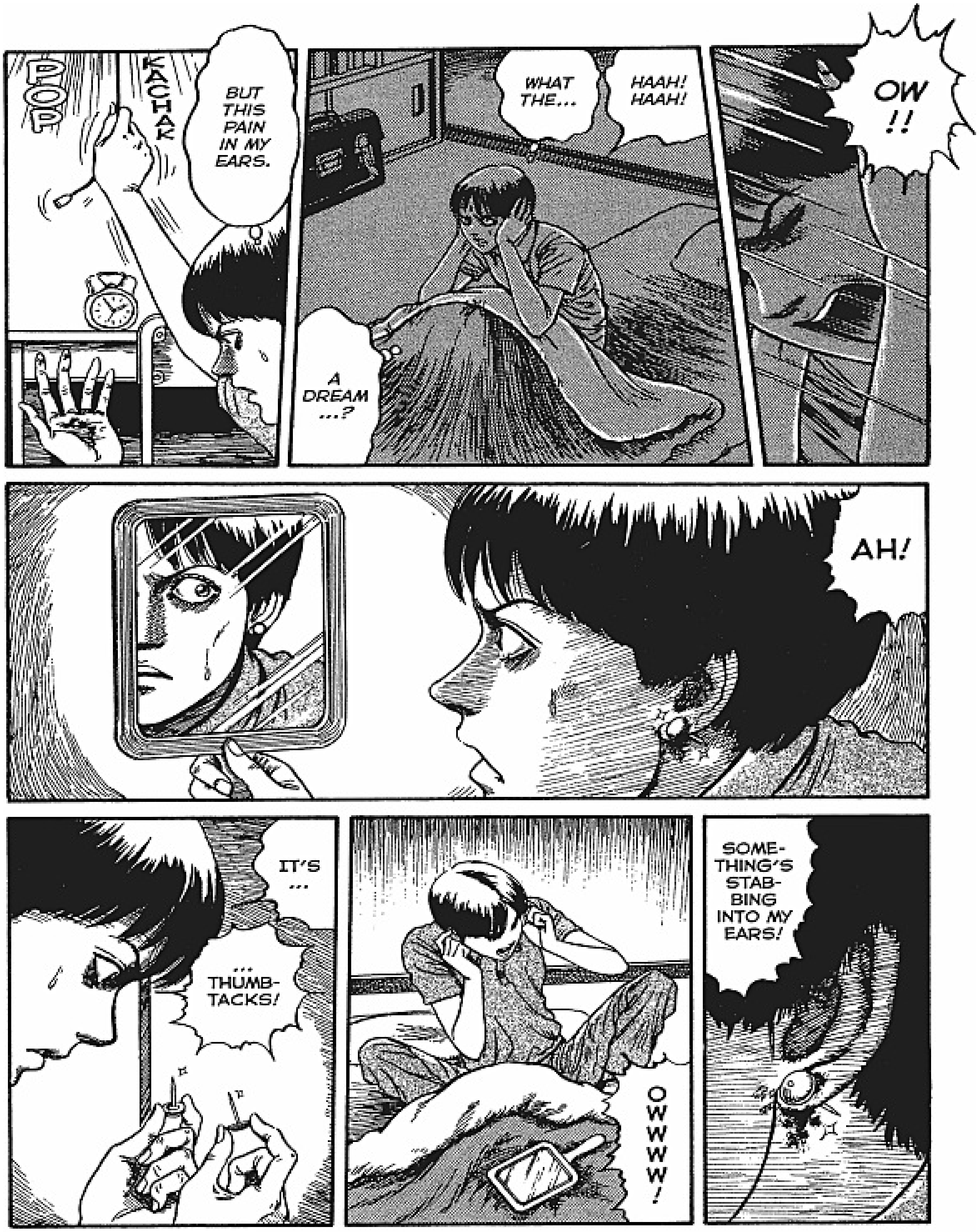

2B
WHY...?
WHISPER WHISPER
WHISPER WHISPER
WHY WOULD SUZUE...
WHISPER
WHISPER
BING BONG
BING BONG
HONESTLY! WHAT IS EVEN GOING ON?!
IT'S JUST AWFUL. SAYING YOU'RE THE BOY AT THE CROSSROADS, I MEAN...
THIS IS JUST MY OPINION, BUT I'M SURE IT'S TO HARASS YOU.
A TOTALLY FALSE RUMOR SPREAD BY PEOPLE WHO DON'T LIKE YOU.

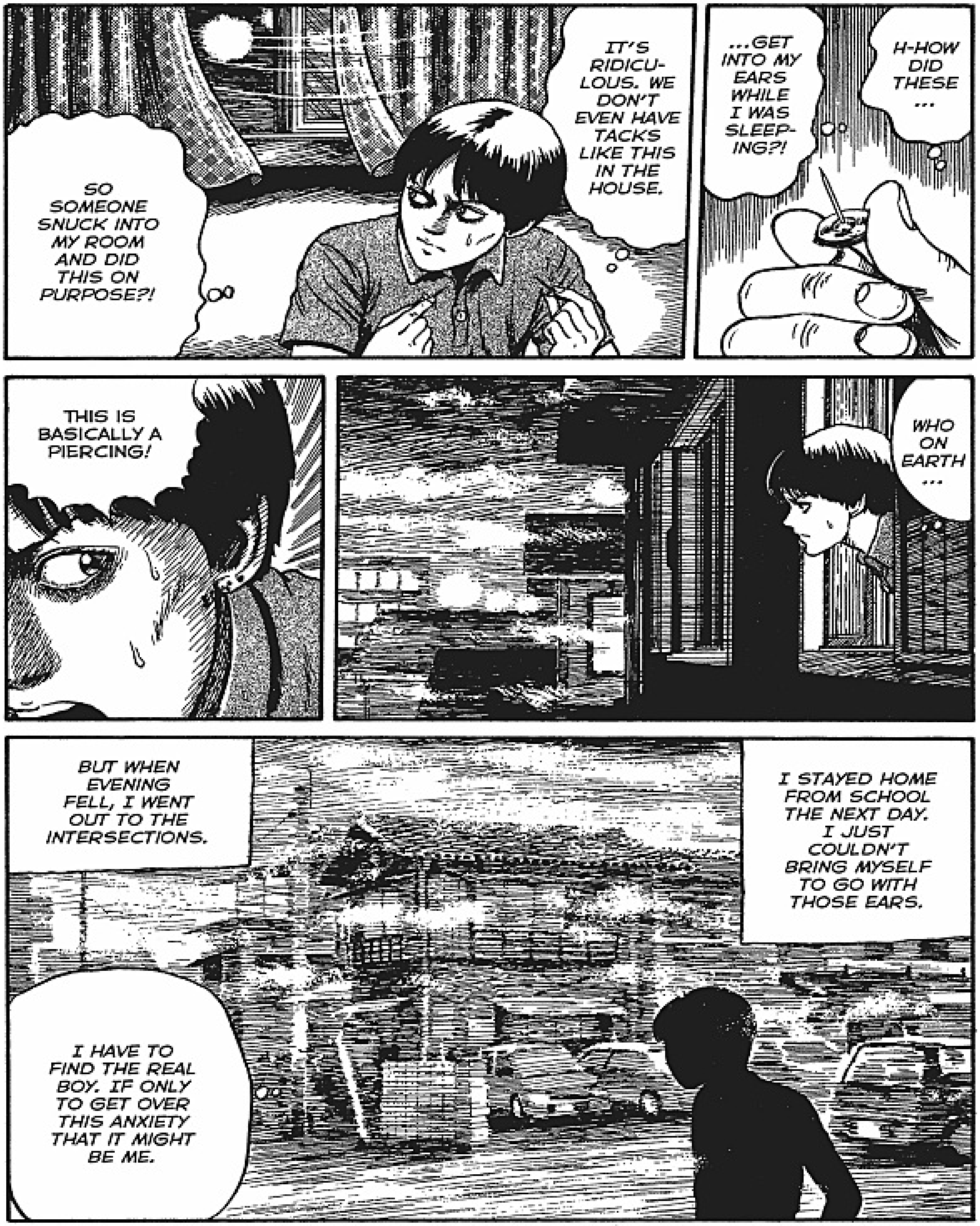

THOSE GUYS HAD CRUSHES ON SUZUE. THEY'RE THE ONES HARASSING YOU.
JUST IGNORE THEM.
HEY, WAIT UP, CROSS-ROADS BOY!
I HAD NO IDEA THAT YOU WERE HIM.
I FIGURED YOU WERE A BAD GUY. I MEAN, YOU BLEW OFF SUZUE. YOU'RE THE REASON SHE KILLED HERSELF.
AND THAT'S NOT ALL. YOU PUSHED SO MANY GIRLS TO SUICIDE! YOU'RE A VILE MONSTER!

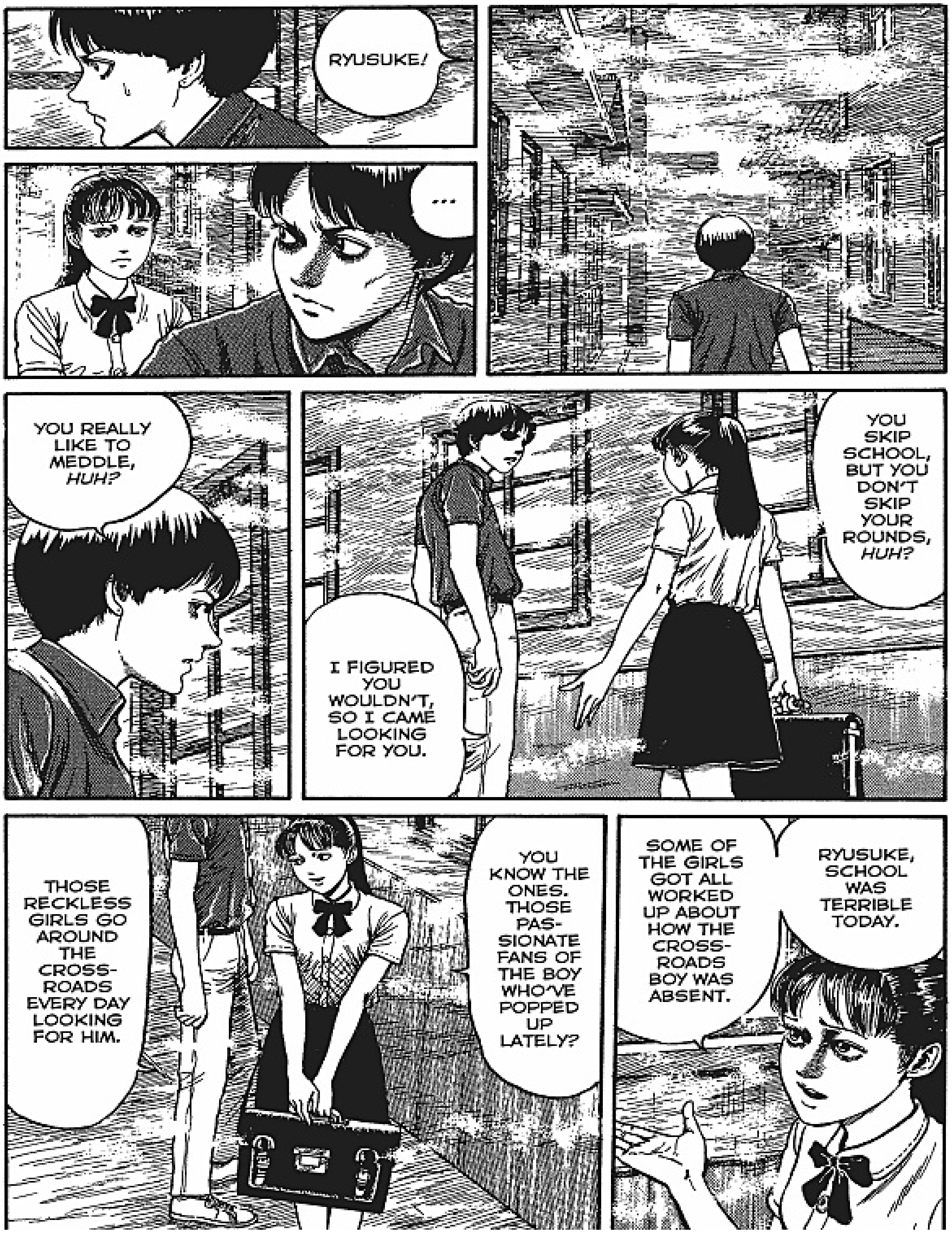

RYU-SUKE'S NOT THE CROSS-ROADS BOY!
QUIT WITH THE LIES!
I'VE SEEN HIM. IT'S A TOTALLY DIFFERENT PERSON.
FIRST OF ALL, RYUSUKE DOESN'T HAVE PIERCED EARS!
HE DOESN'T HAVE ANY EARRINGS!
HMPH. PIERC-INGS AREN'T THE ONLY KIND OF EAR-RINGS.
AND DO YOU HAVE ANY *PROOF* THAT THE GUY YOU SAW WAS ACTUALLY THE REAL DEAL?
WHAT?
...
ANYWAY, RYUSUKE FUKADA.
YOU'RE NOT GONNA JUST WALK AWAY FROM THIS.
THEY REALLY ARE AWFUL.
I WISH THEY WOULDN'T LUMP YOU IN WITH *HIM*, A GUY WHO DRIVES STRANGERS TO SUICIDE!
...

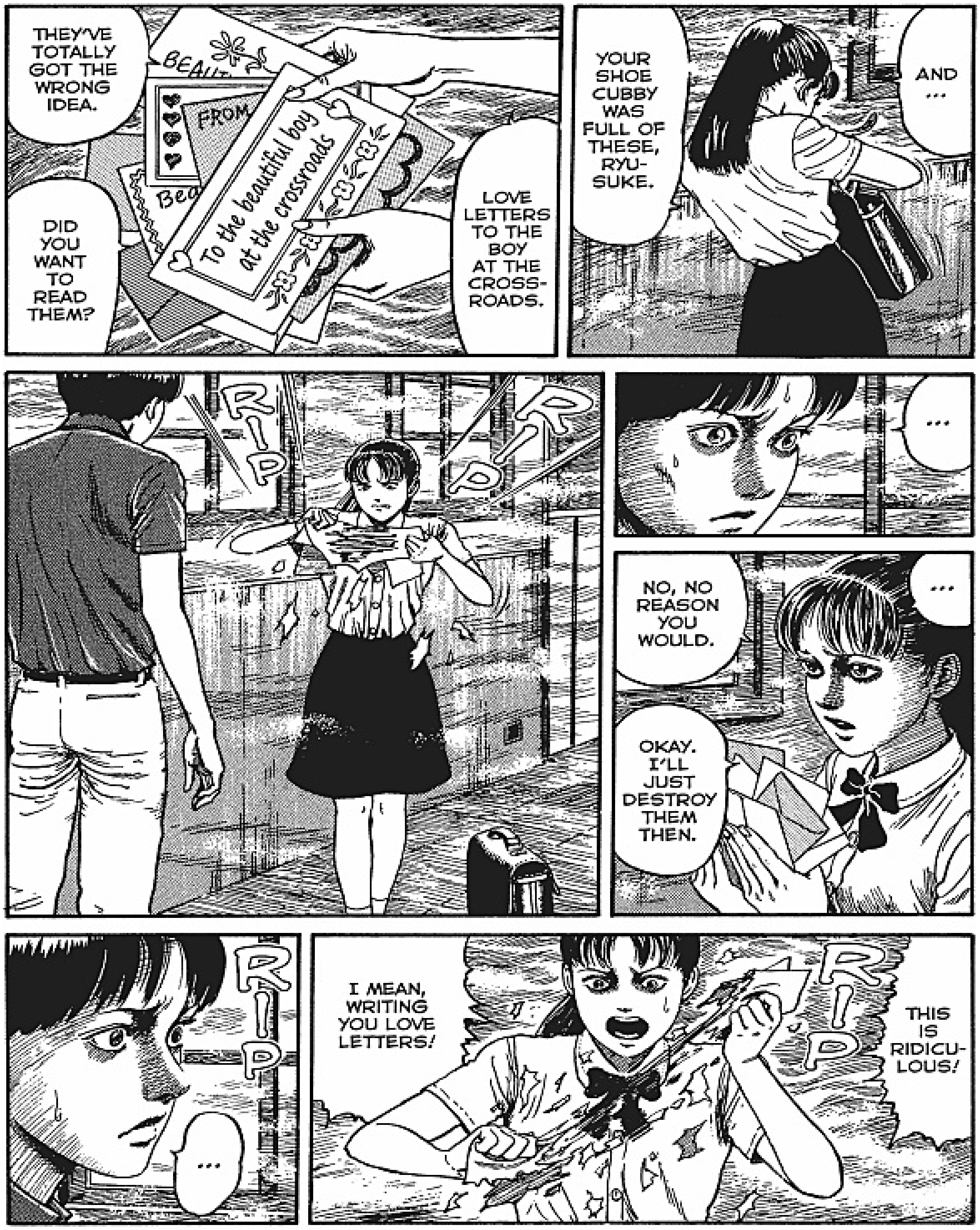

NOW THAT I THINK ABOUT IT, IT'S TRUE THAT THERE'S NO PROOF THE BOY MIDORI AND I SAW WAS ACTUALLY THE CROSSROADS BOY.
THE ONLY PEOPLE WHO HAVE SEEN HIM FOR SURE ARE THE SUICIDES. ONLY SUZUE AND THE OTHERS!
AND IF SUZUE IS SAYING I'M THE BOY AT THE CROSSROADS...
MAYBE IT'S LIKE TEJIMA SAID AND I DON'T EVEN KNOW IT MYSELF?
BUT... I DON'T WANT TO BELIEVE THAT! I HAVE TO FIND HIM AND MAKE SURE!
AS SOON AS I CAN!
...
AH!

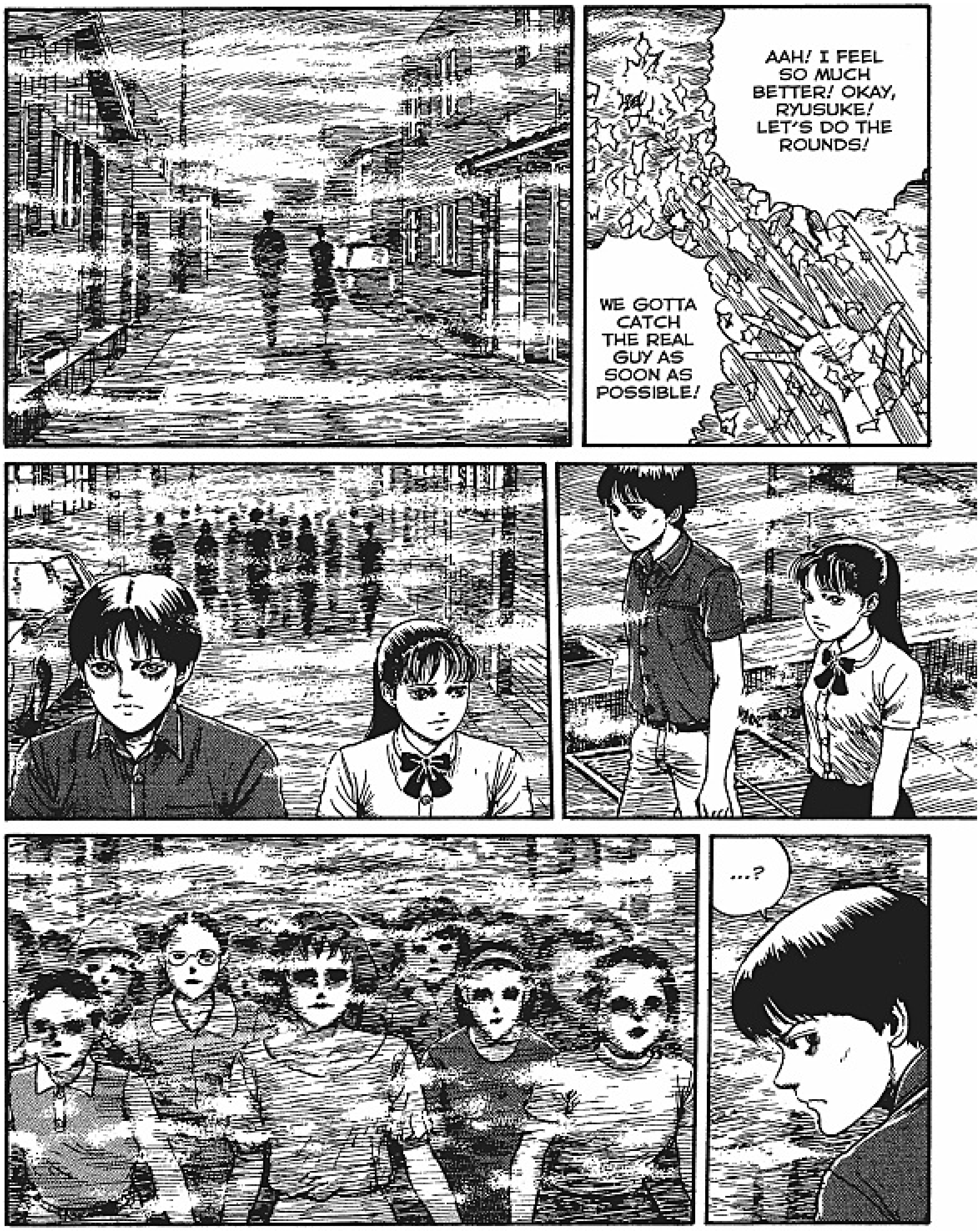

IT'S HIM!
GRIN
STOP!
CHK
SHWF
SNAP

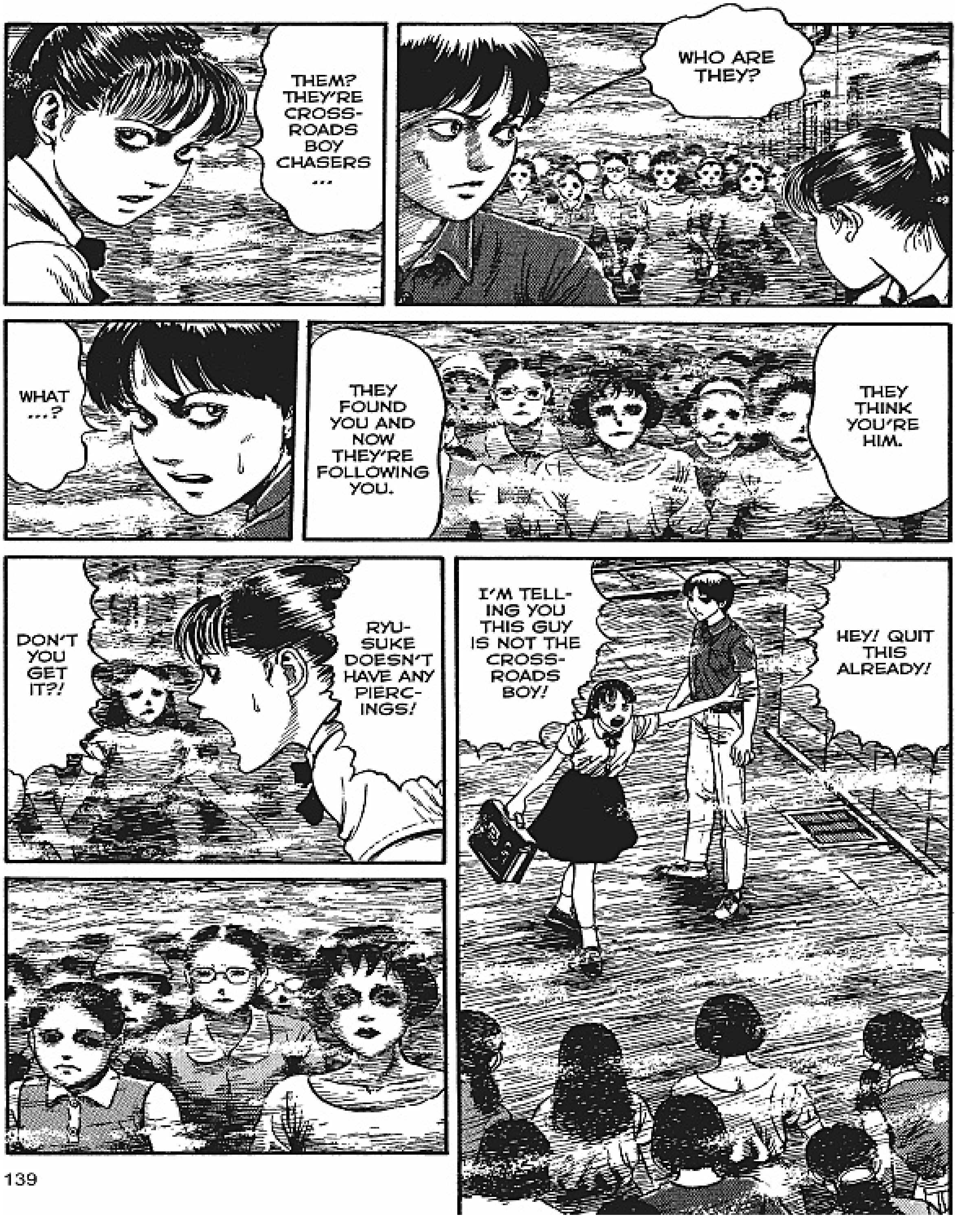

POP
KACHAK
BUT THIS PAIN IN MY EARS.
WHAT THE...
HAAH! HAAH!
A DREAM ...?
OW !!
AH!
IT'S ...
... THUMB-TACKS!
OWWWW!
SOME-THING'S STAB-BING INTO MY EARS!

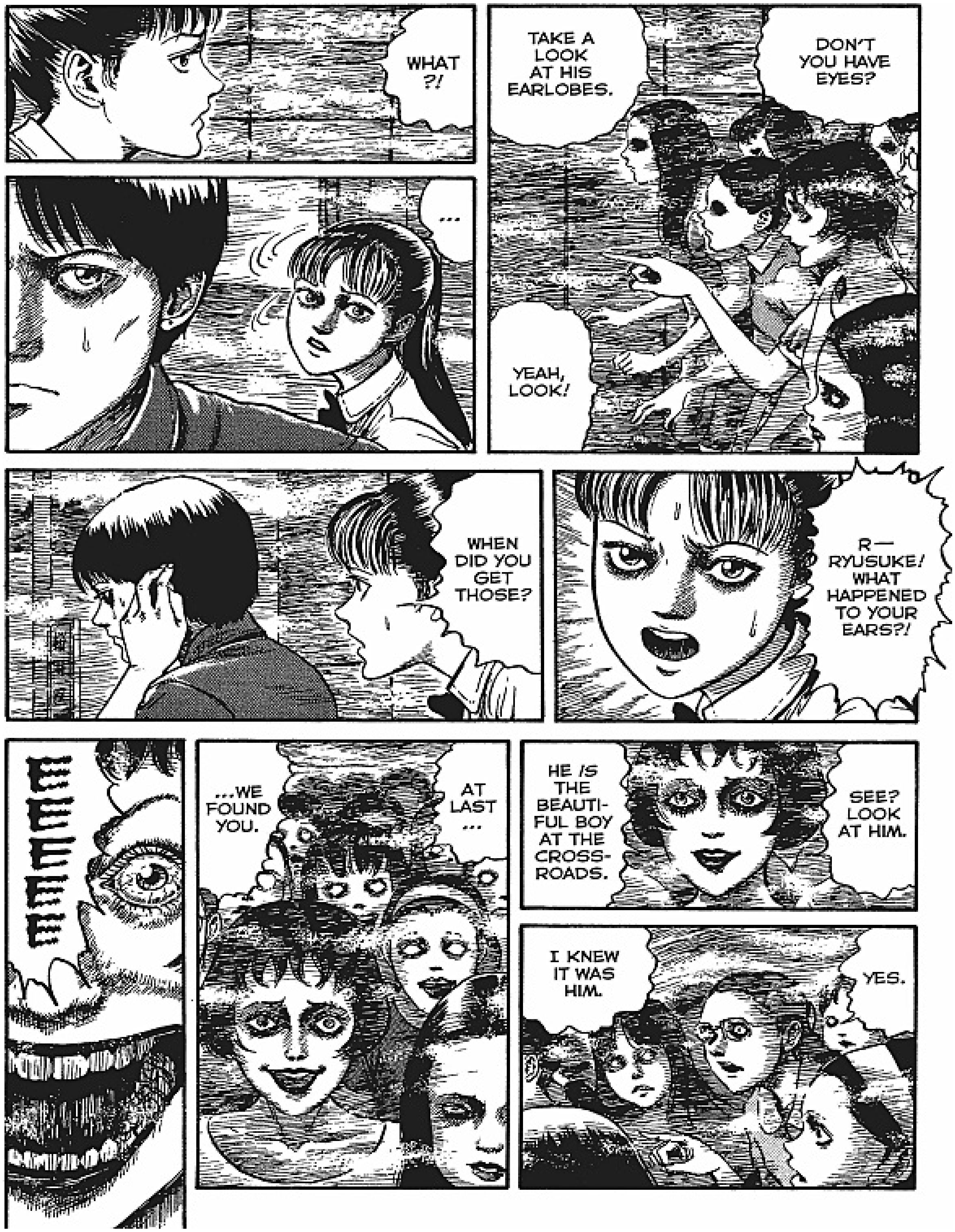

H-HOW DID THESE...
...GET INTO MY EARS WHILE I WAS SLEEPING?!
IT'S RIDICULOUS. WE DON'T EVEN HAVE TACKS LIKE THIS IN THE HOUSE.
SO SOMEONE SNUCK INTO MY ROOM AND DID THIS ON PURPOSE?!
WHO ON EARTH...
THIS IS BASICALLY A PIERCING!
I STAYED HOME FROM SCHOOL THE NEXT DAY. I JUST COULDN'T BRING MYSELF TO GO WITH THOSE EARS.
BUT WHEN EVENING FELL, I WENT OUT TO THE INTERSECTIONS.
I HAVE TO FIND THE REAL BOY. IF ONLY TO GET OVER THIS ANXIETY THAT IT MIGHT BE ME.

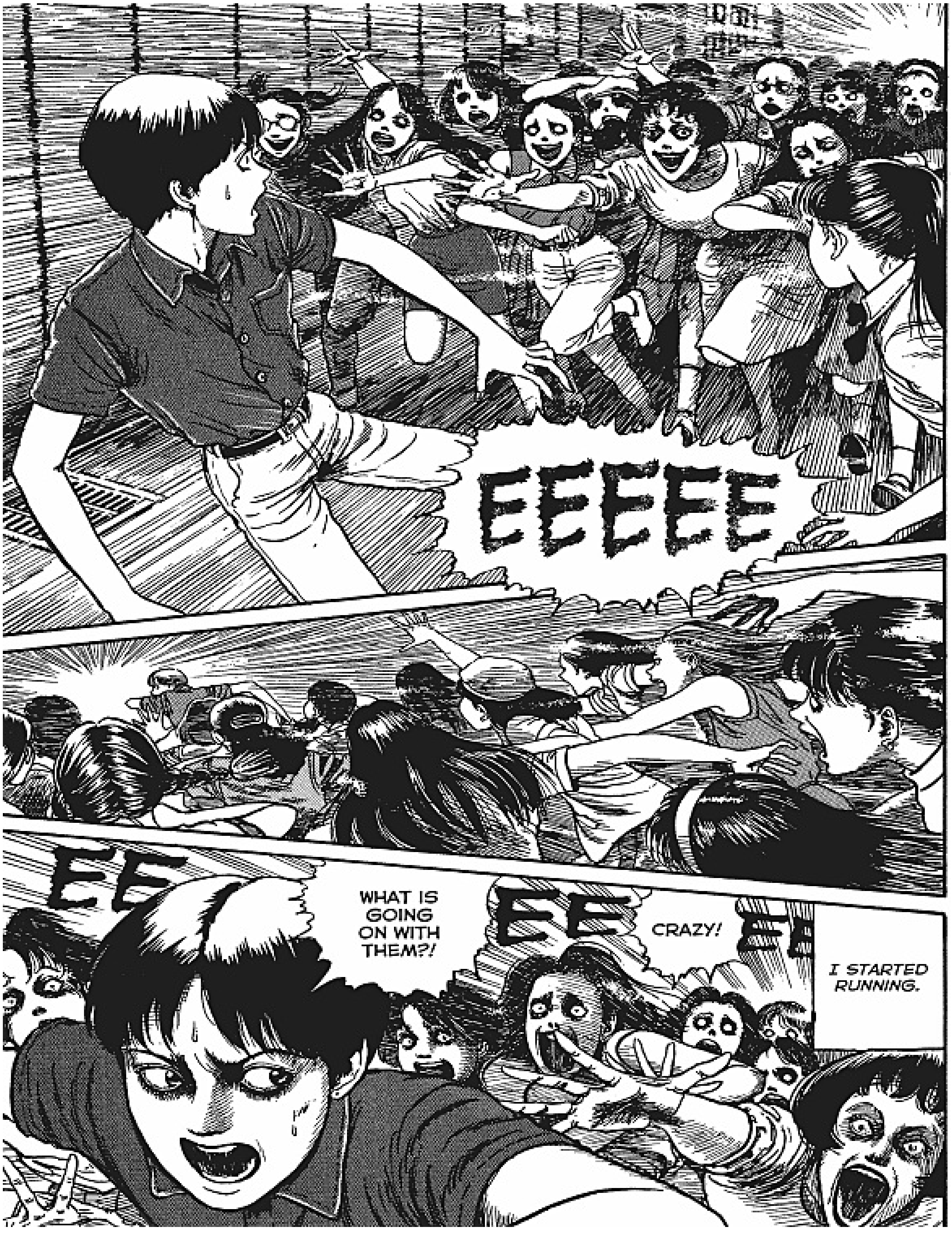

RYUSUKE!
...
YOU SKIP SCHOOL, BUT YOU DON'T SKIP YOUR ROUNDS, *HUH?*
I FIGURED YOU WOULDN'T, SO I CAME LOOKING FOR YOU.
YOU REALLY LIKE TO MEDDLE, *HUH?*
RYUSUKE, SCHOOL WAS TERRIBLE TODAY.
SOME OF THE GIRLS GOT ALL WORKED UP ABOUT HOW THE CROSSROADS BOY WAS ABSENT.
YOU KNOW THE ONES. THOSE PASSIONATE FANS OF THE BOY WHO'VE POPPED UP LATELY?
THOSE RECKLESS GIRLS GO AROUND THE CROSSROADS EVERY DAY LOOKING FOR HIM.

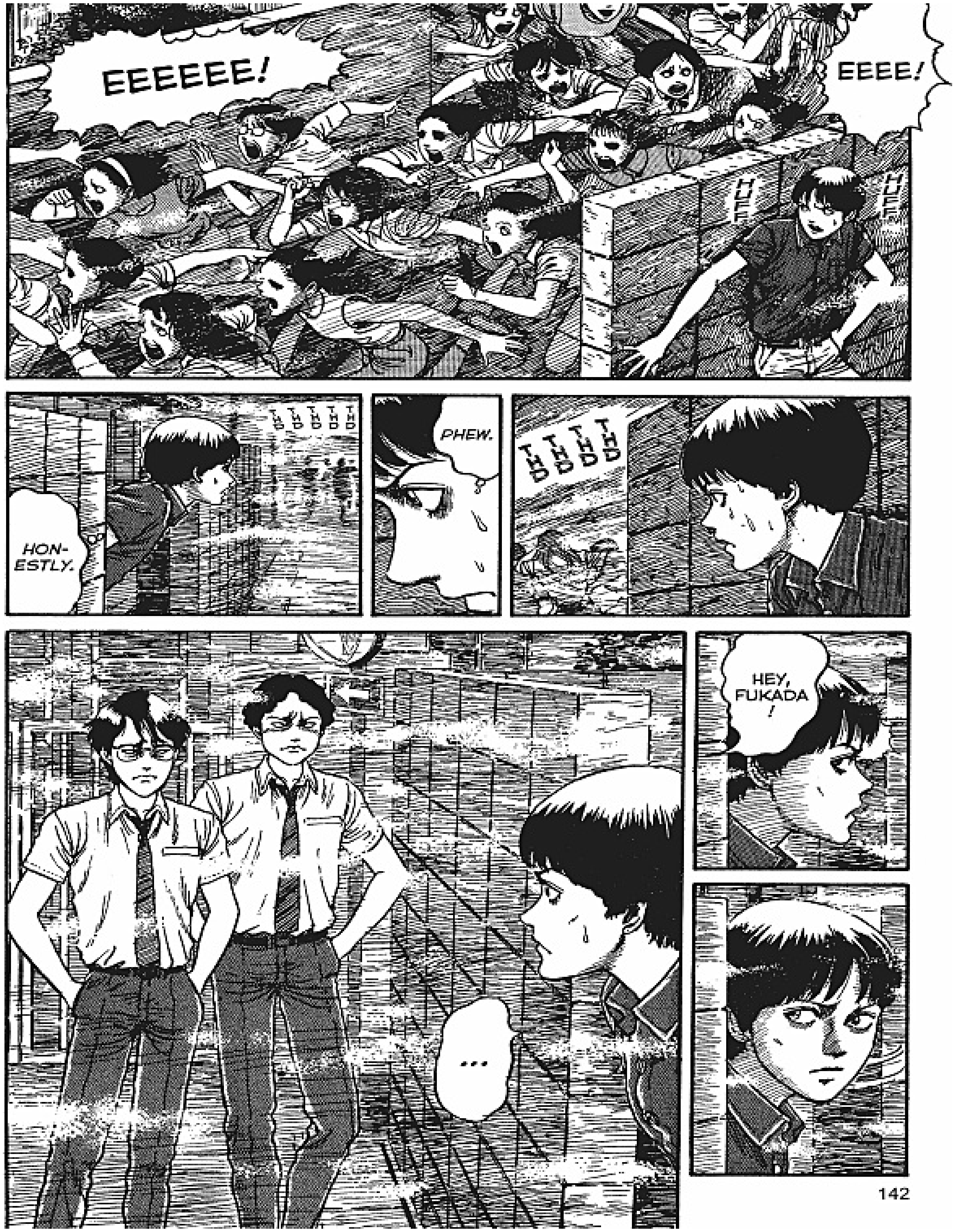

And ...
Your shoe cubby was full of these, Ryusuke.
Love letters to the boy at the crossroads.
To the beautiful boy at the crossroads
FROM
BEAU
Bea
They've totally got the wrong idea.
Did you want to read them?
...
...
No, no reason you would.
Okay. I'll just destroy them then.
RIP
RIP
This is ridiculous!
RIP
I mean, writing you love letters!
RIP
...

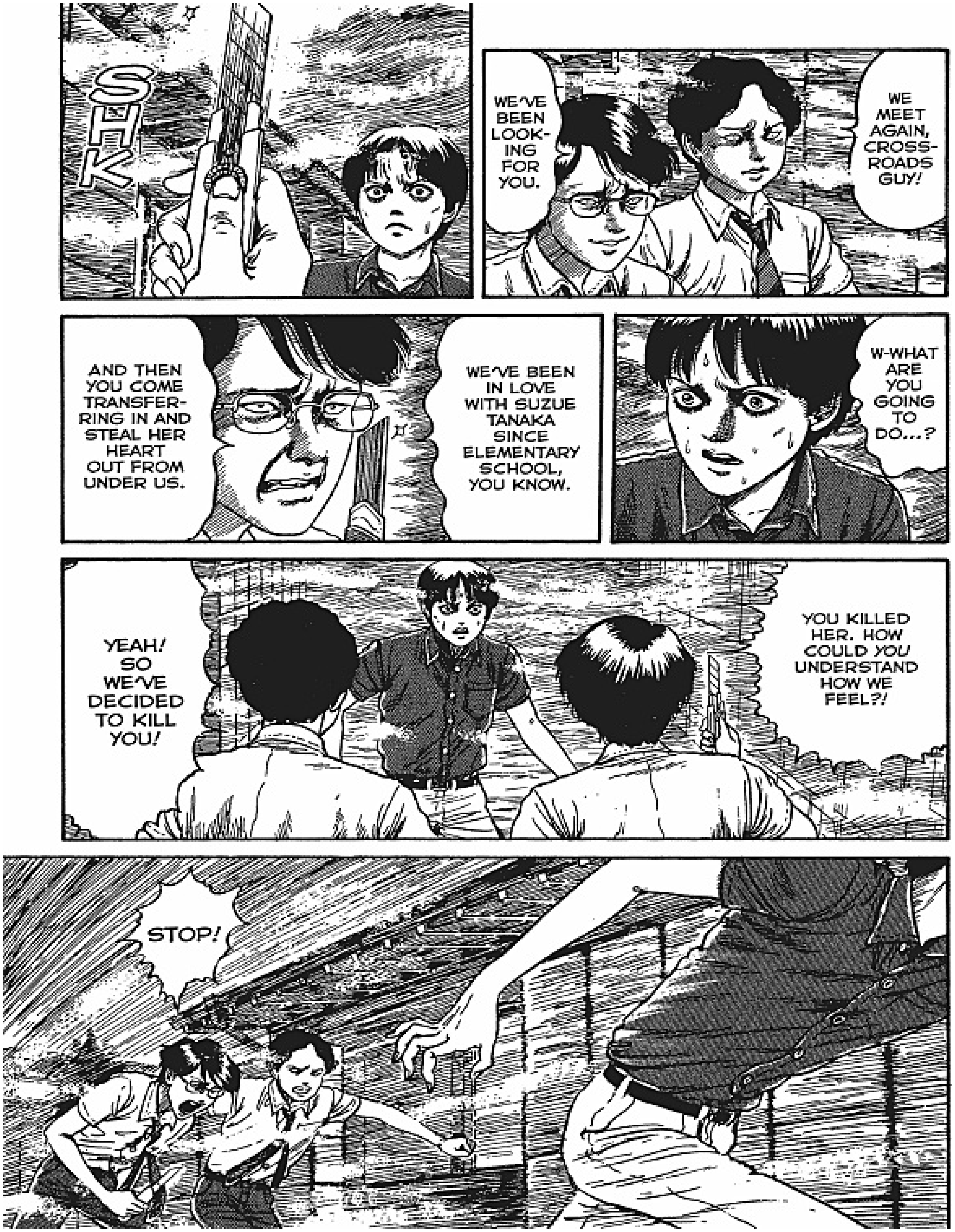

AAH! I FEEL SO MUCH BETTER! OKAY, RYUSUKE! LET'S DO THE ROUNDS!
WE GOTTA CATCH THE REAL GUY AS SOON AS POSSIBLE!
...?

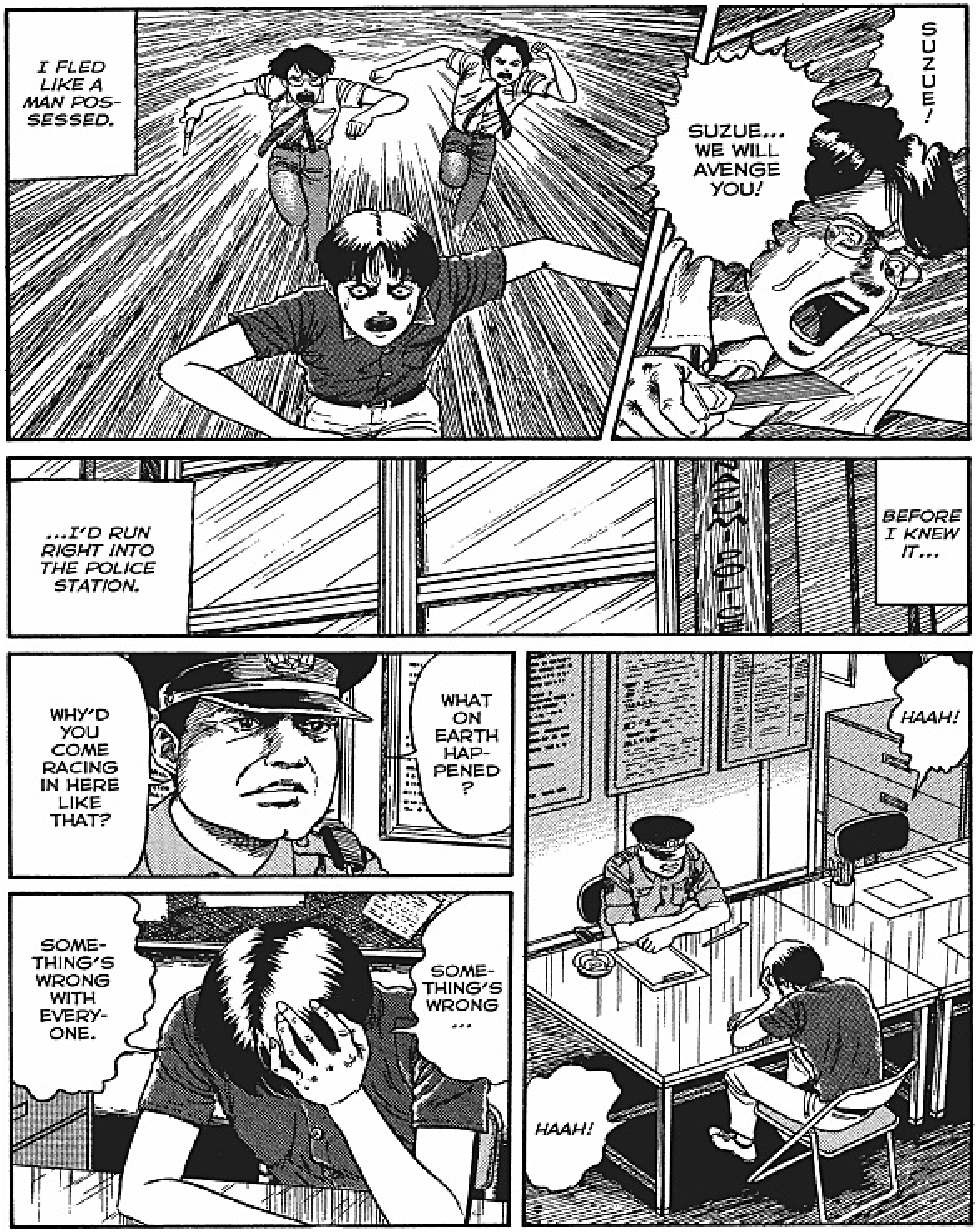

WHO ARE THEY?
THEM? THEY'RE CROSSROADS BOY CHASERS...
THEY THINK YOU'RE HIM.
THEY FOUND YOU AND NOW THEY'RE FOLLOWING YOU.
WHAT...?
HEY! QUIT THIS ALREADY!
I'M TELLING YOU THIS GUY IS NOT THE CROSSROADS BOY!
RYUSUKE DOESN'T HAVE ANY PIERCINGS!
DON'T YOU GET IT?!

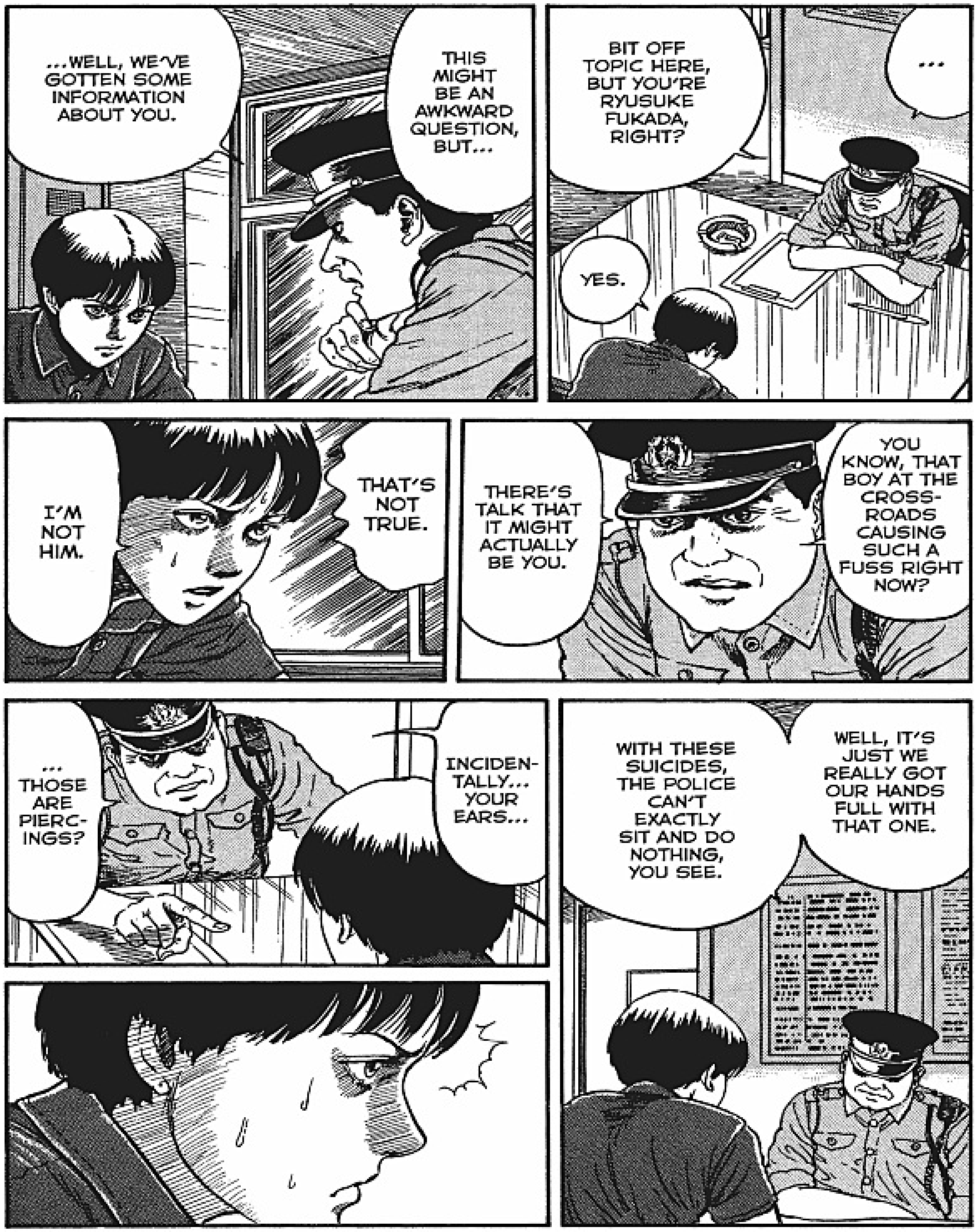

DON'T YOU HAVE EYES?
TAKE A LOOK AT HIS EARLOBES.
YEAH, LOOK!
WHAT ?!
...
R— RYUSUKE! WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR EARS?!
WHEN DID YOU GET THOSE?
SEE? LOOK AT HIM.
HE *IS* THE BEAUTIFUL BOY AT THE CROSSROADS.
YES.
I KNEW IT WAS HIM.
AT LAST ...
...WE FOUND YOU.
EEEEEEE

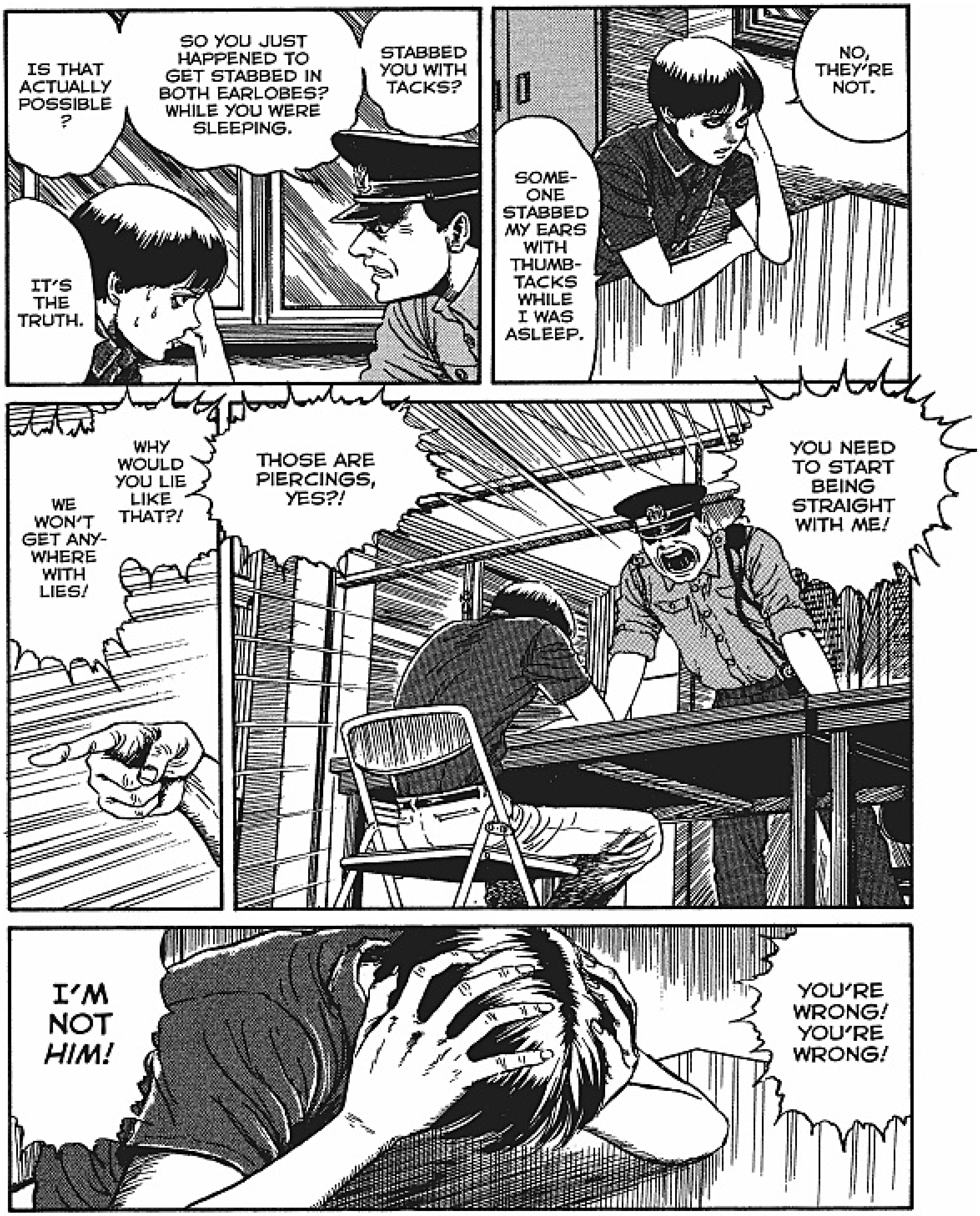

EEEEE
EE
EE
EE
CRAZY!
WHAT IS GOING ON WITH THEM?!
I STARTED RUNNING.

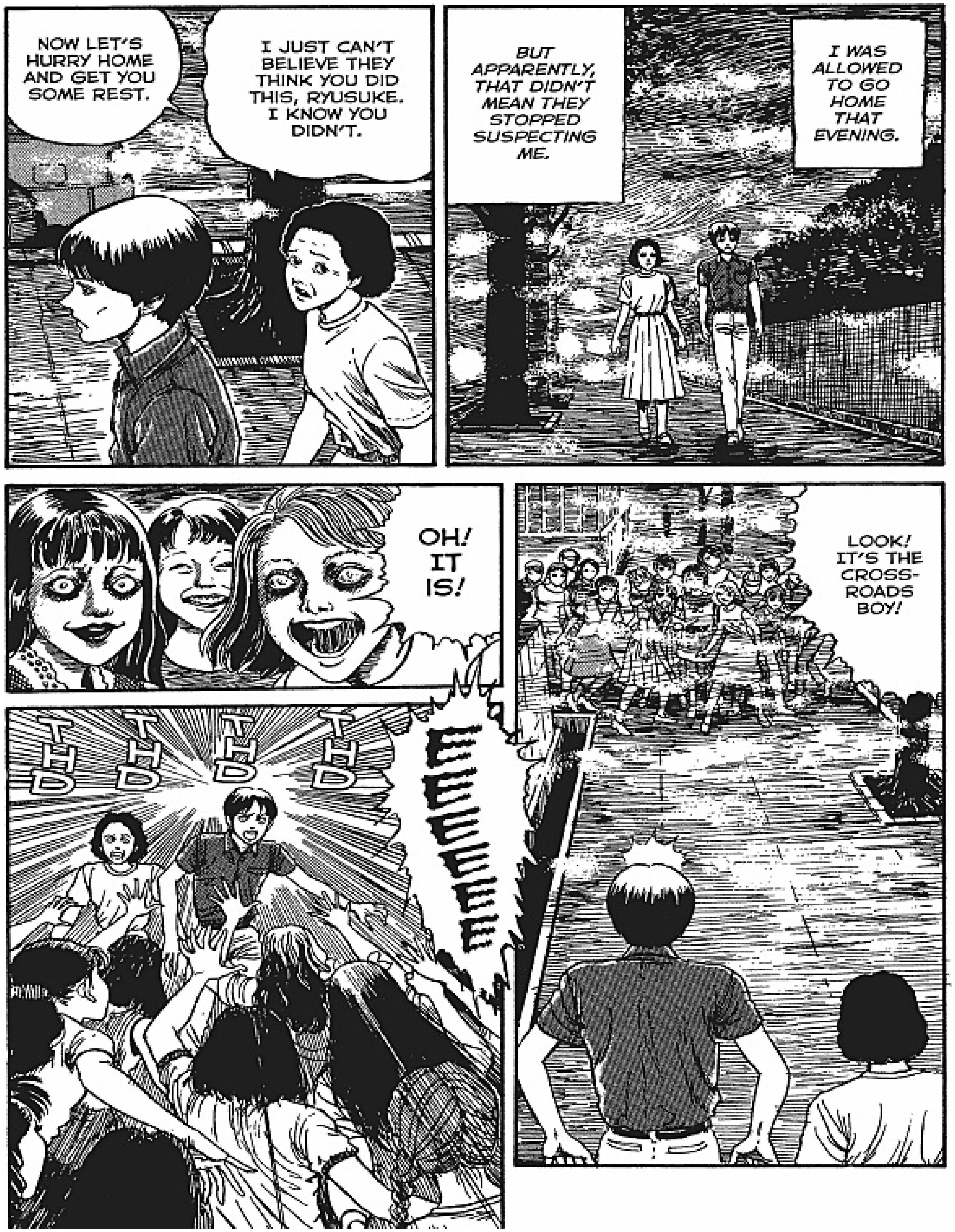

EEEE!
EEEEEE!
HUFF
HUFF
THD THD THD
PHEW.
THD THD THD THD THD
HONESTLY.
HEY, FUKADA!
...

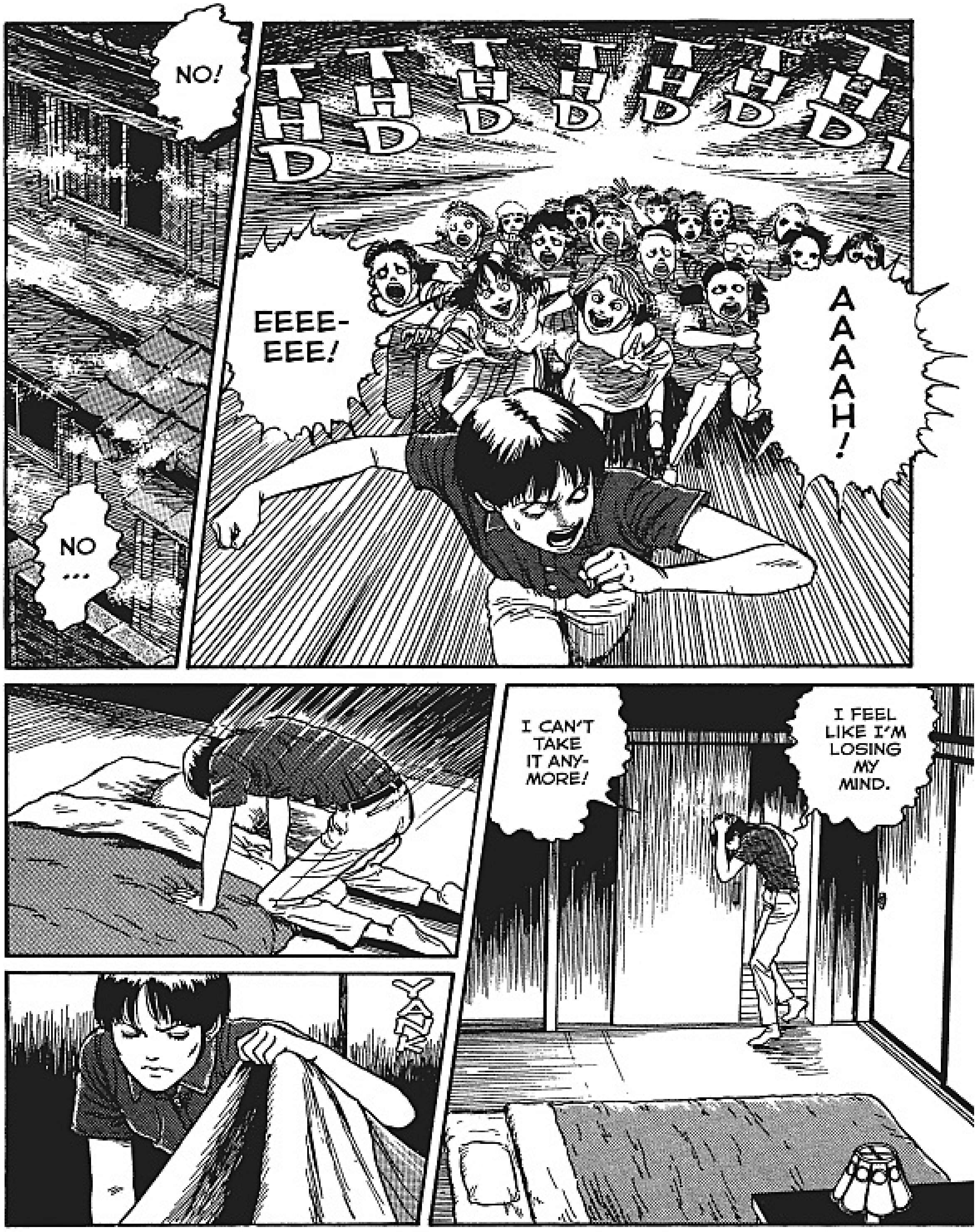

WE MEET AGAIN, CROSS-ROADS GUY!
WE'VE BEEN LOOKING FOR YOU.
SHK
W-WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO...?
WE'VE BEEN IN LOVE WITH SUZUE TANAKA SINCE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, YOU KNOW.
AND THEN YOU COME TRANSFERRING IN AND STEAL HER HEART OUT FROM UNDER US.
YOU KILLED HER. HOW COULD *YOU* UNDERSTAND HOW WE FEEL?!
YEAH! SO WE'VE DECIDED TO KILL YOU!
STOP!

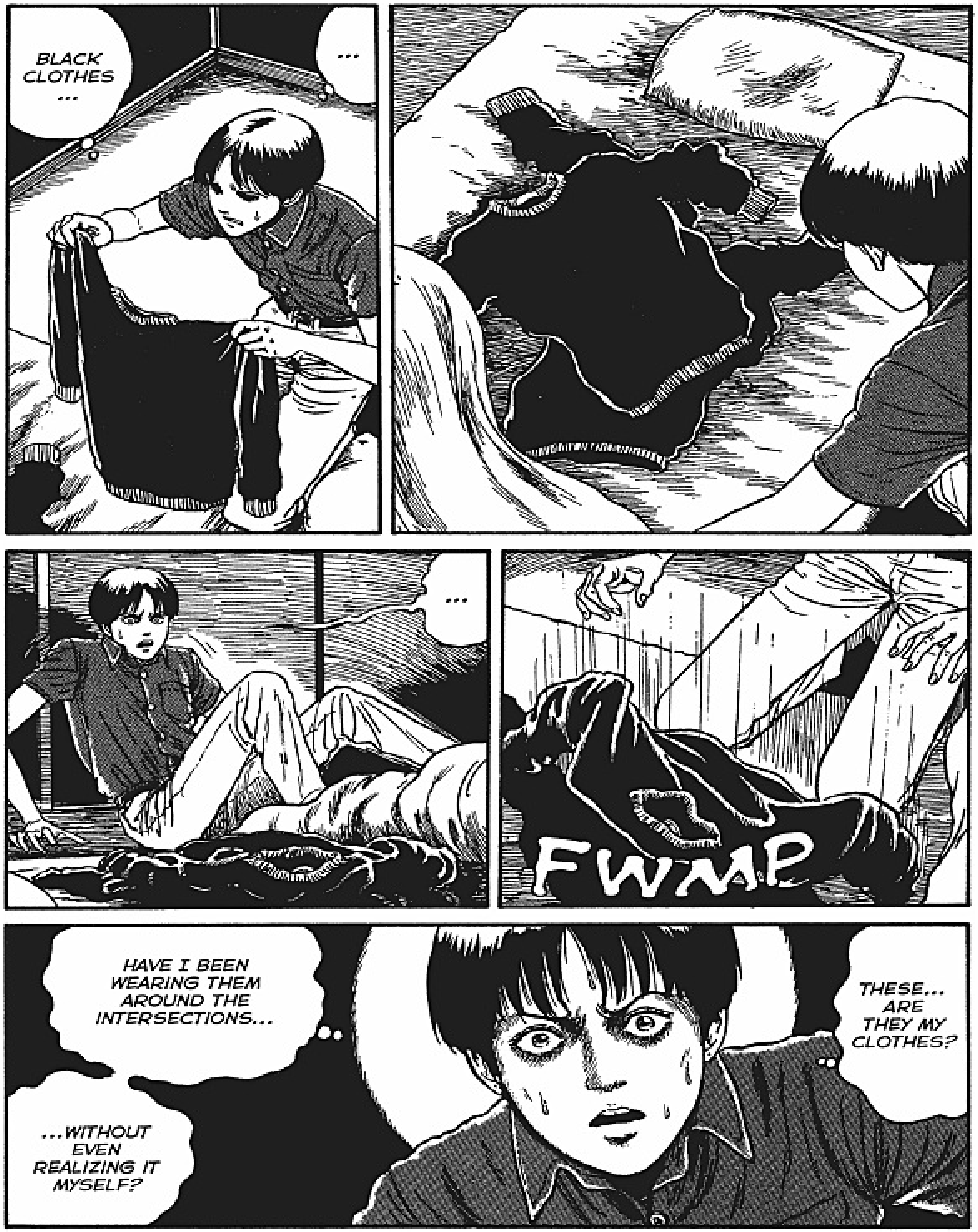

SUZUE!
SUZUE... WE WILL AVENGE YOU!
I FLED LIKE A MAN POSSESSED.
BEFORE I KNEW IT...
...I'D RUN RIGHT INTO THE POLICE STATION.
HAAH!
HAAH!
WHAT ON EARTH HAPPENED?
WHY'D YOU COME RACING IN HERE LIKE THAT?
SOMETHING'S WRONG...
SOMETHING'S WRONG WITH EVERYONE.

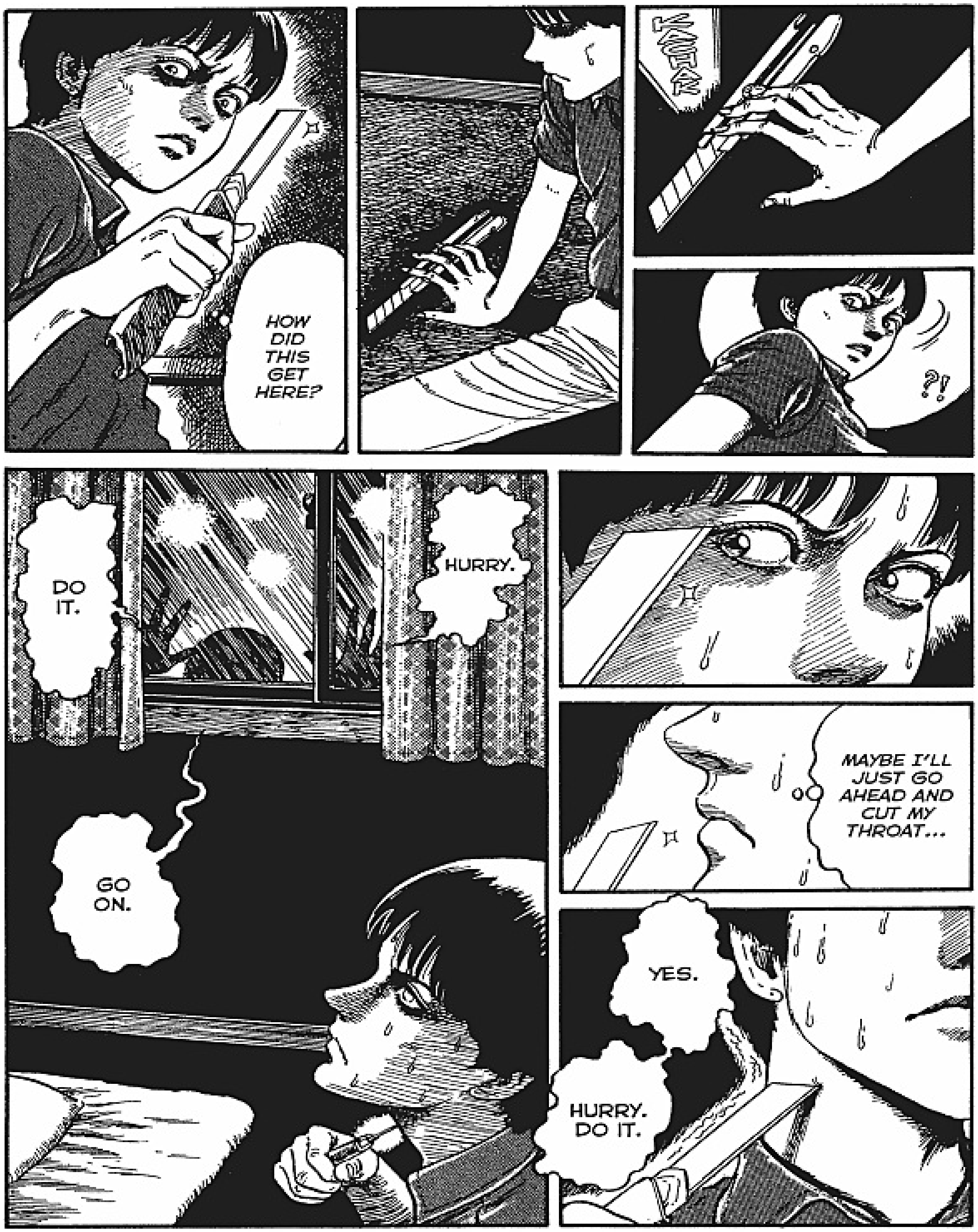

...
BIT OFF TOPIC HERE, BUT YOU'RE RYUSUKE FUKADA, RIGHT?
YES.
THIS MIGHT BE AN AWKWARD QUESTION, BUT...
...WELL, WE'VE GOTTEN SOME INFORMATION ABOUT YOU.
YOU KNOW, THAT BOY AT THE CROSSROADS CAUSING SUCH A FUSS RIGHT NOW?
THERE'S TALK THAT IT MIGHT ACTUALLY BE YOU.
THAT'S NOT TRUE.
I'M NOT HIM.
WELL, IT'S JUST WE REALLY GOT OUR HANDS FULL WITH THAT ONE.
WITH THESE SUICIDES, THE POLICE CAN'T EXACTLY SIT AND DO NOTHING, YOU SEE.
INCIDENTALLY... YOUR EARS...
... THOSE ARE PIERCINGS?

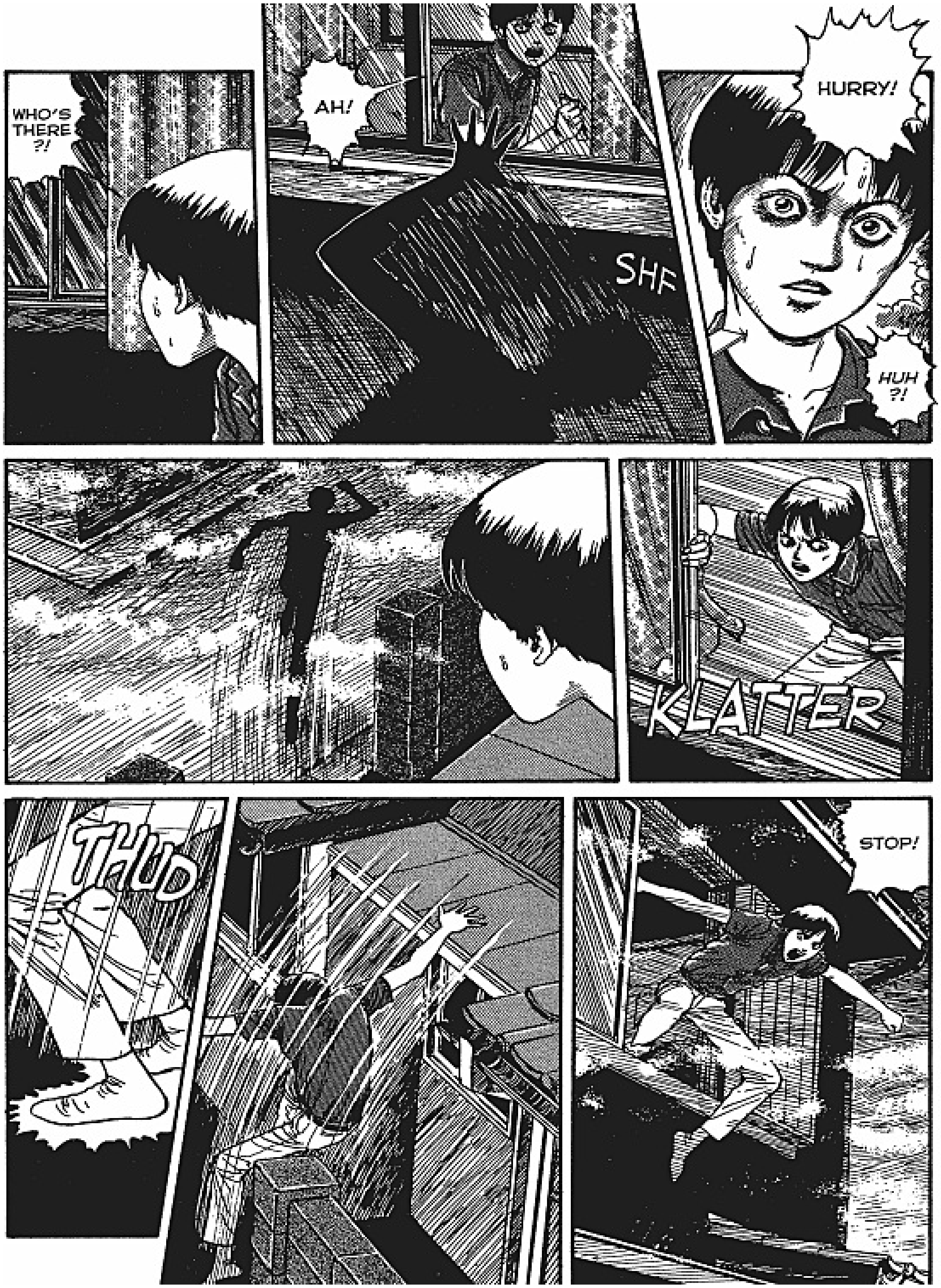

NO, THEY'RE NOT.
SOMEONE STABBED MY EARS WITH THUMBTACKS WHILE I WAS ASLEEP.
STABBED YOU WITH TACKS?
SO YOU JUST HAPPENED TO GET STABBED IN BOTH EARLOBES? WHILE YOU WERE SLEEPING.
IS THAT ACTUALLY POSSIBLE?
IT'S THE TRUTH.
YOU NEED TO START BEING STRAIGHT WITH ME!
THOSE ARE PIERCINGS, YES?!
WHY WOULD YOU LIE LIKE THAT?!
WE WON'T GET ANYWHERE WITH LIES!
YOU'RE WRONG! YOU'RE WRONG!
I'M NOT *HIM*!

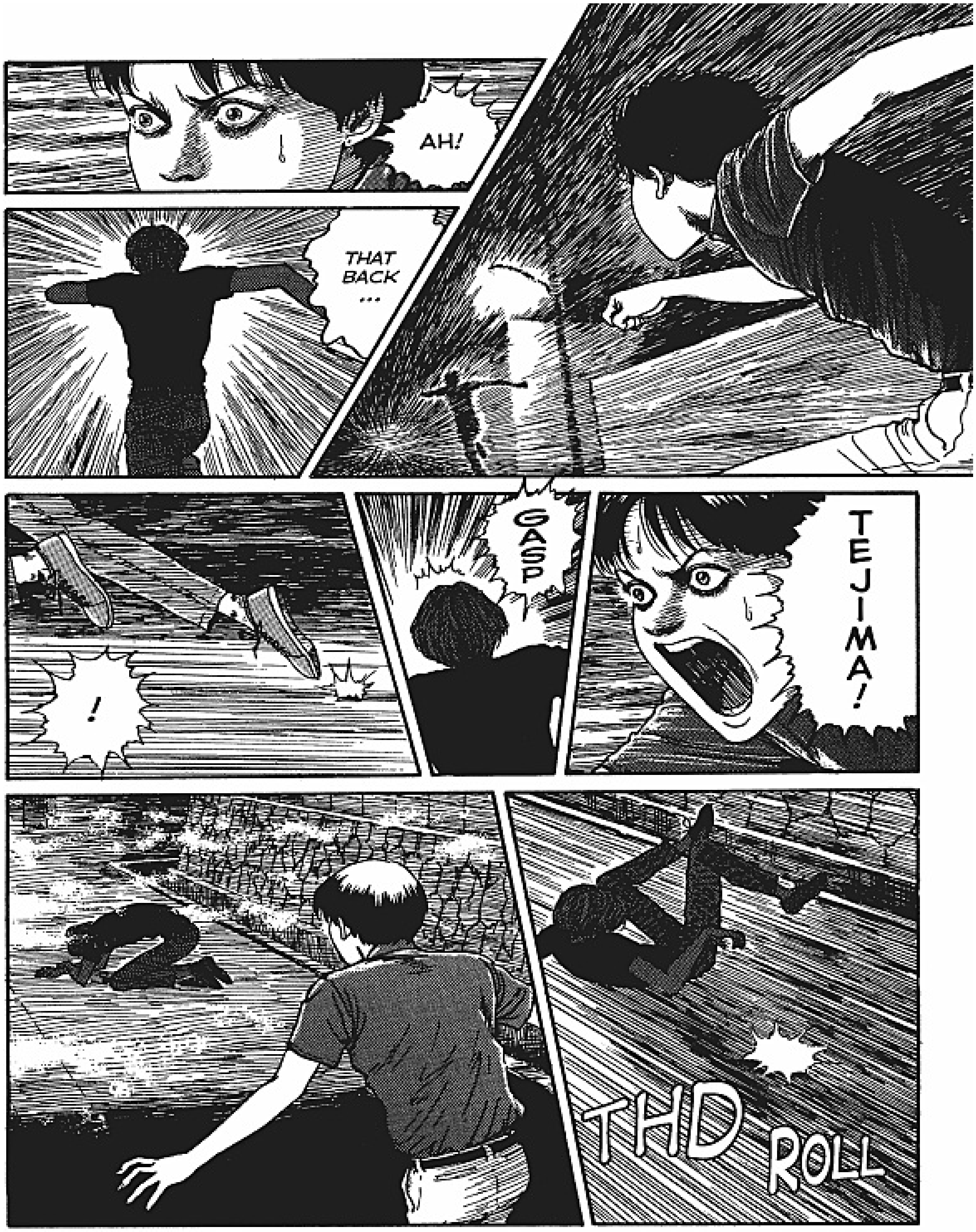

I WAS ALLOWED TO GO HOME THAT EVENING.
BUT APPARENTLY, THAT DIDN'T MEAN THEY STOPPED SUSPECTING ME.
I JUST CAN'T BELIEVE THEY THINK YOU DID THIS, RYUSUKE. I KNOW YOU DIDN'T.
NOW LET'S HURRY HOME AND GET YOU SOME REST.
LOOK! IT'S THE CROSS-ROADS BOY!
OH! IT IS!
EEEEEEE
THD THD THD THD

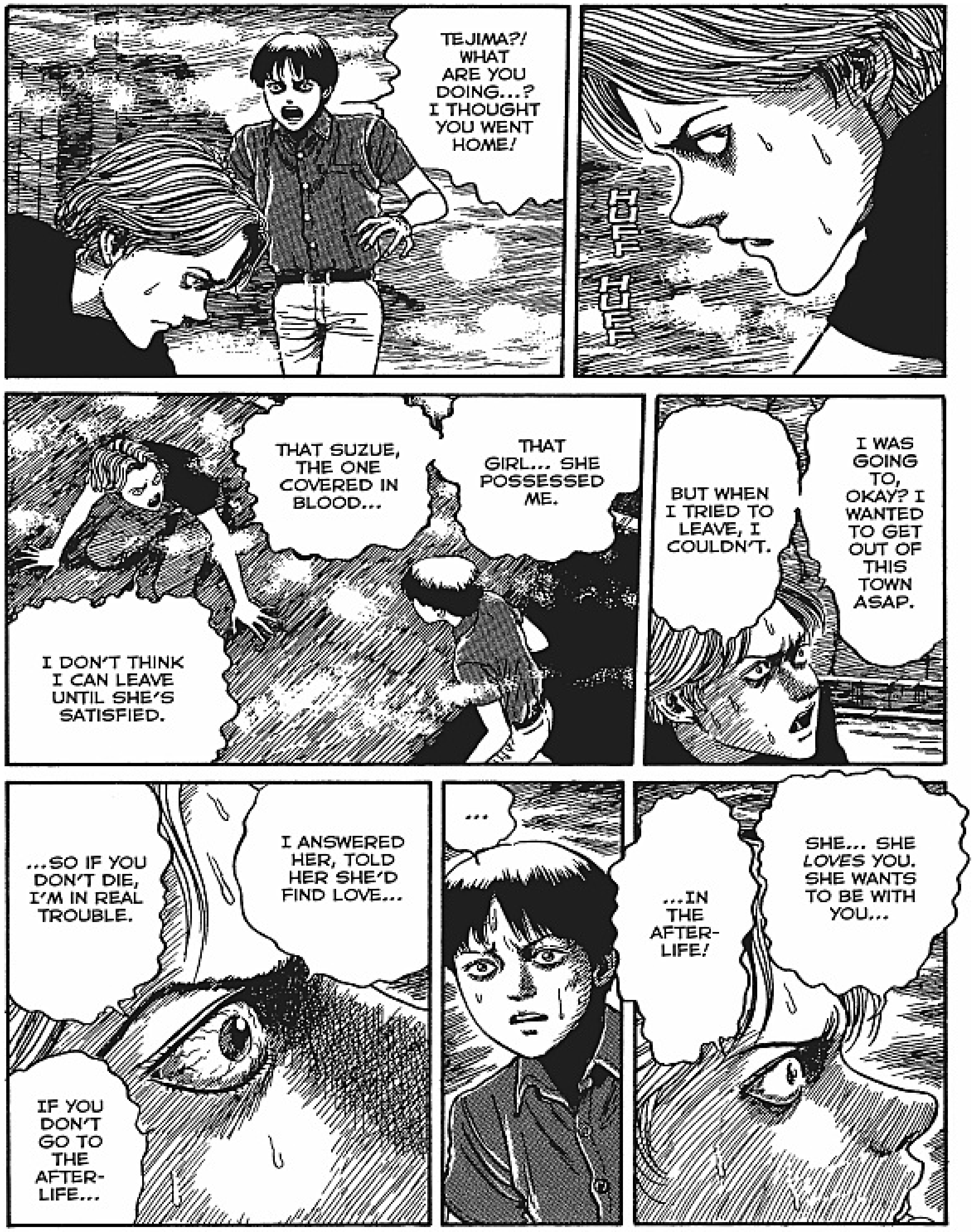

THDDDDDD
AAAAH!
EEEE-EEE!
NO!
NO...
I FEEL LIKE I'M LOSING MY MIND.
I CAN'T TAKE IT ANY-MORE!
YANK

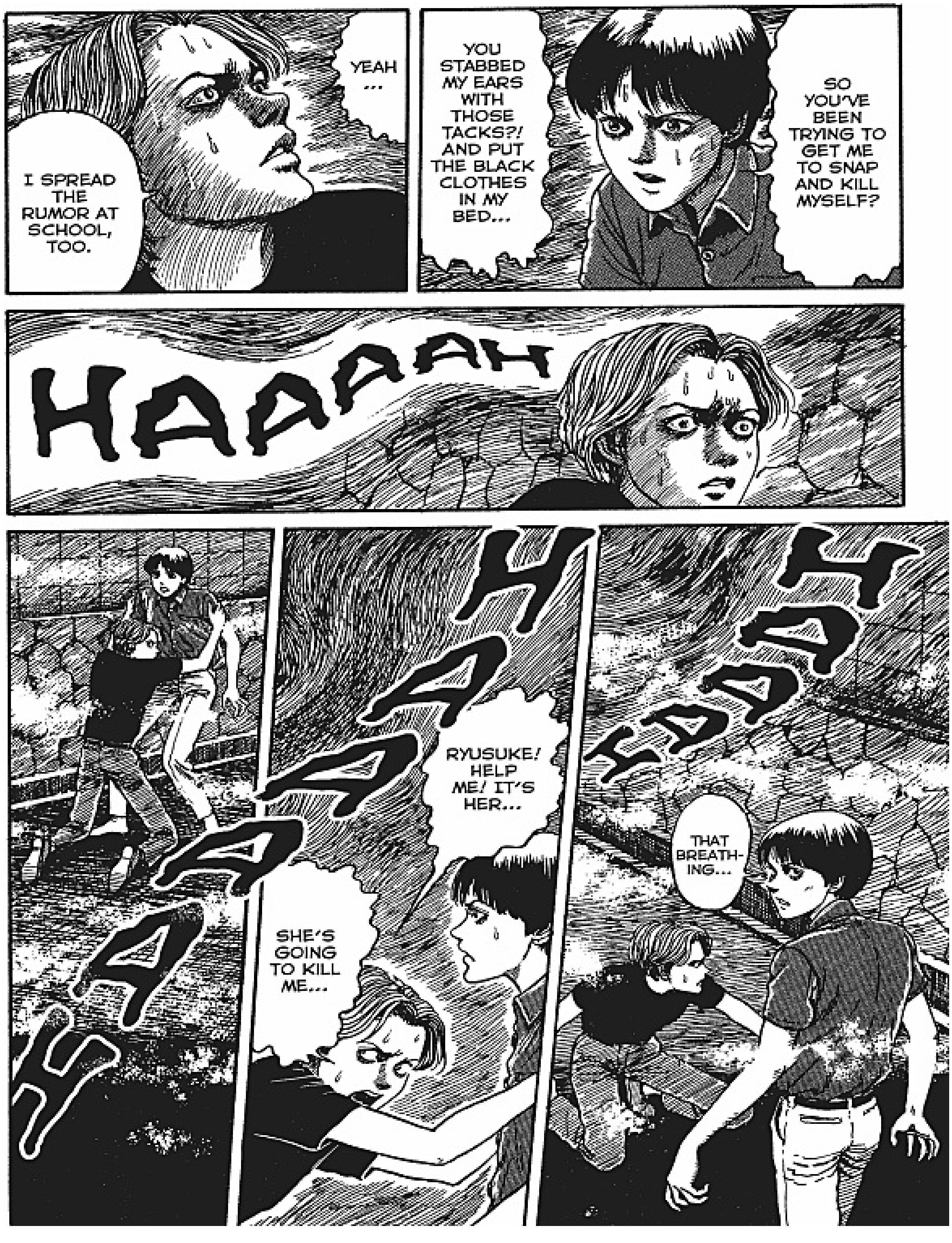

...
BLACK CLOTHES ...
FWMP
...
THESE... ARE THEY MY CLOTHES?
HAVE I BEEN WEARING THEM AROUND THE INTERSECTIONS...
...WITHOUT EVEN REALIZING IT MYSELF?

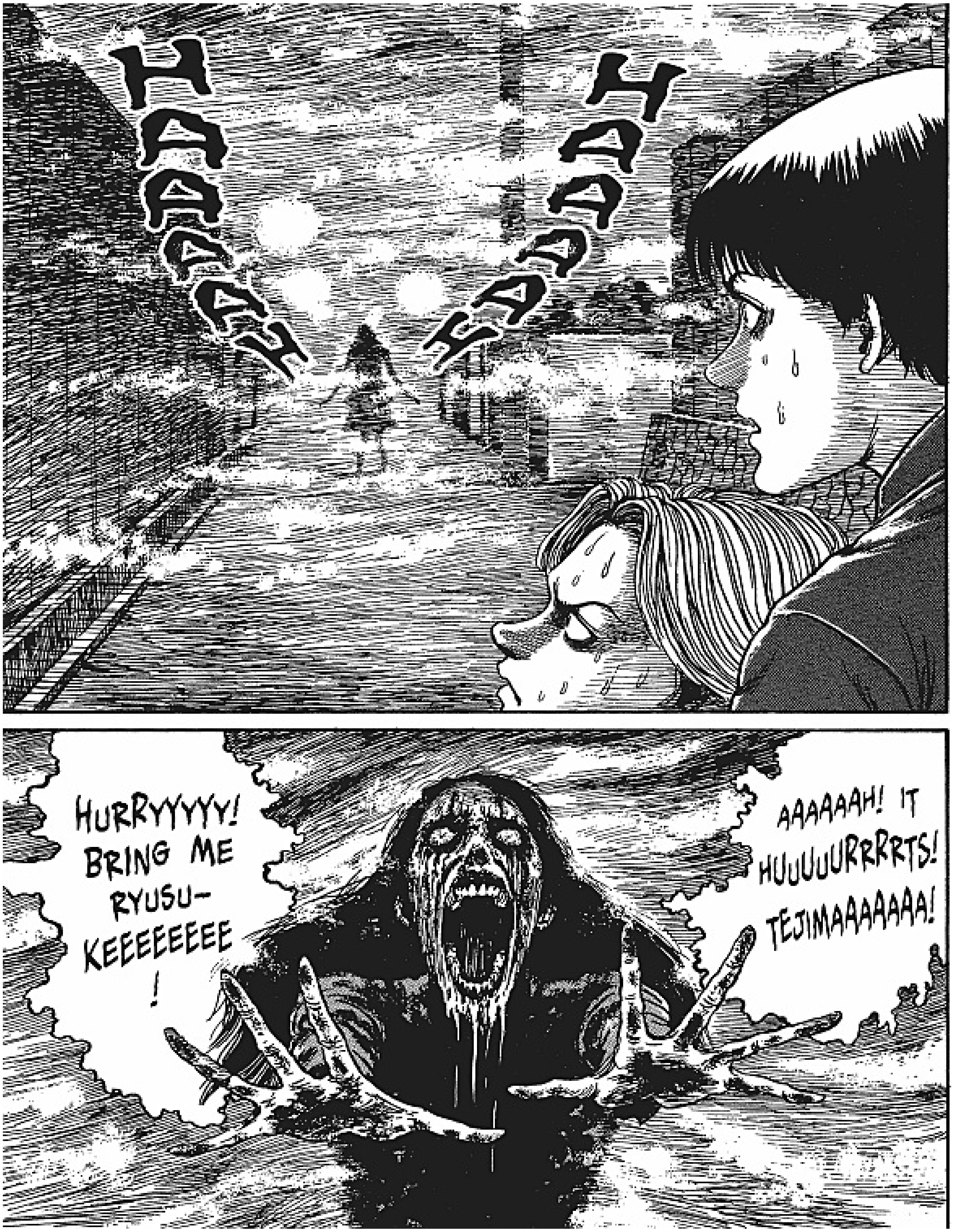

?!
HOW DID THIS GET HERE?
MAYBE I'LL JUST GO AHEAD AND CUT MY THROAT...
YES.
HURRY. DO IT.
HURRY.
DO IT.
GO ON.

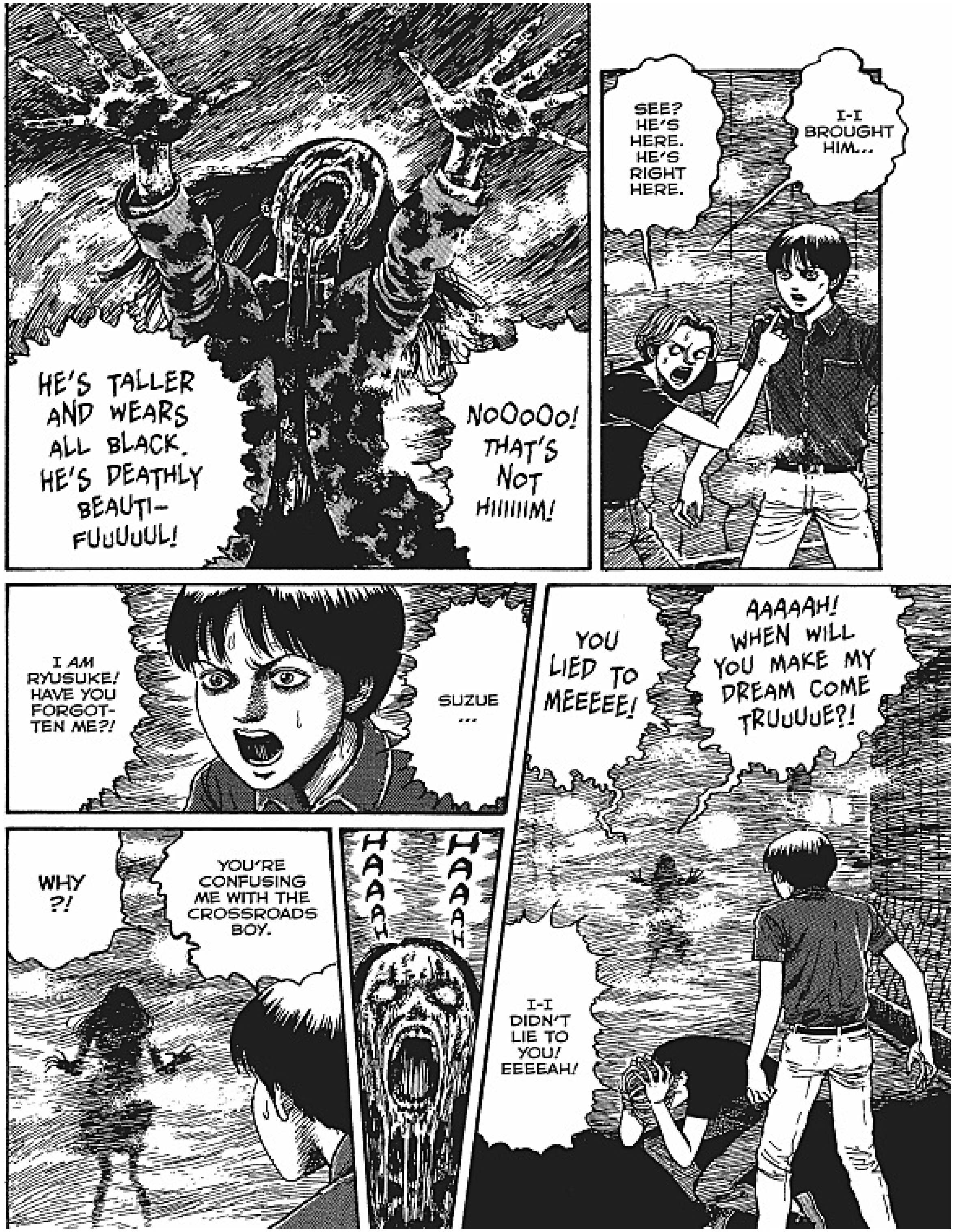

HURRY!
HUH ?!
AH!
SHF
WHO'S THERE ?!
KLATTER
STOP!
THUD

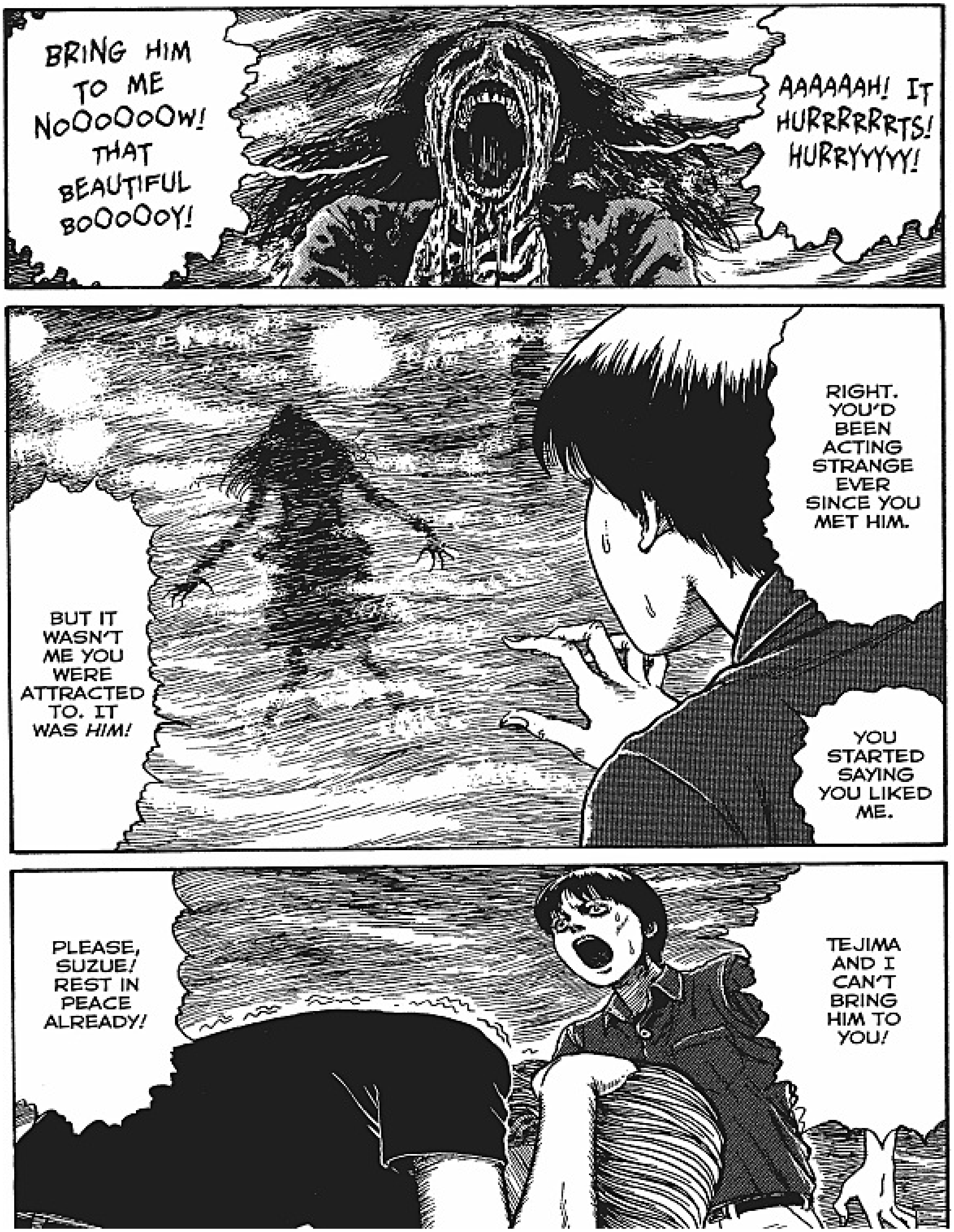

AH!
THAT BACK ...
!
GASP
TEJIMA!
THD
ROLL

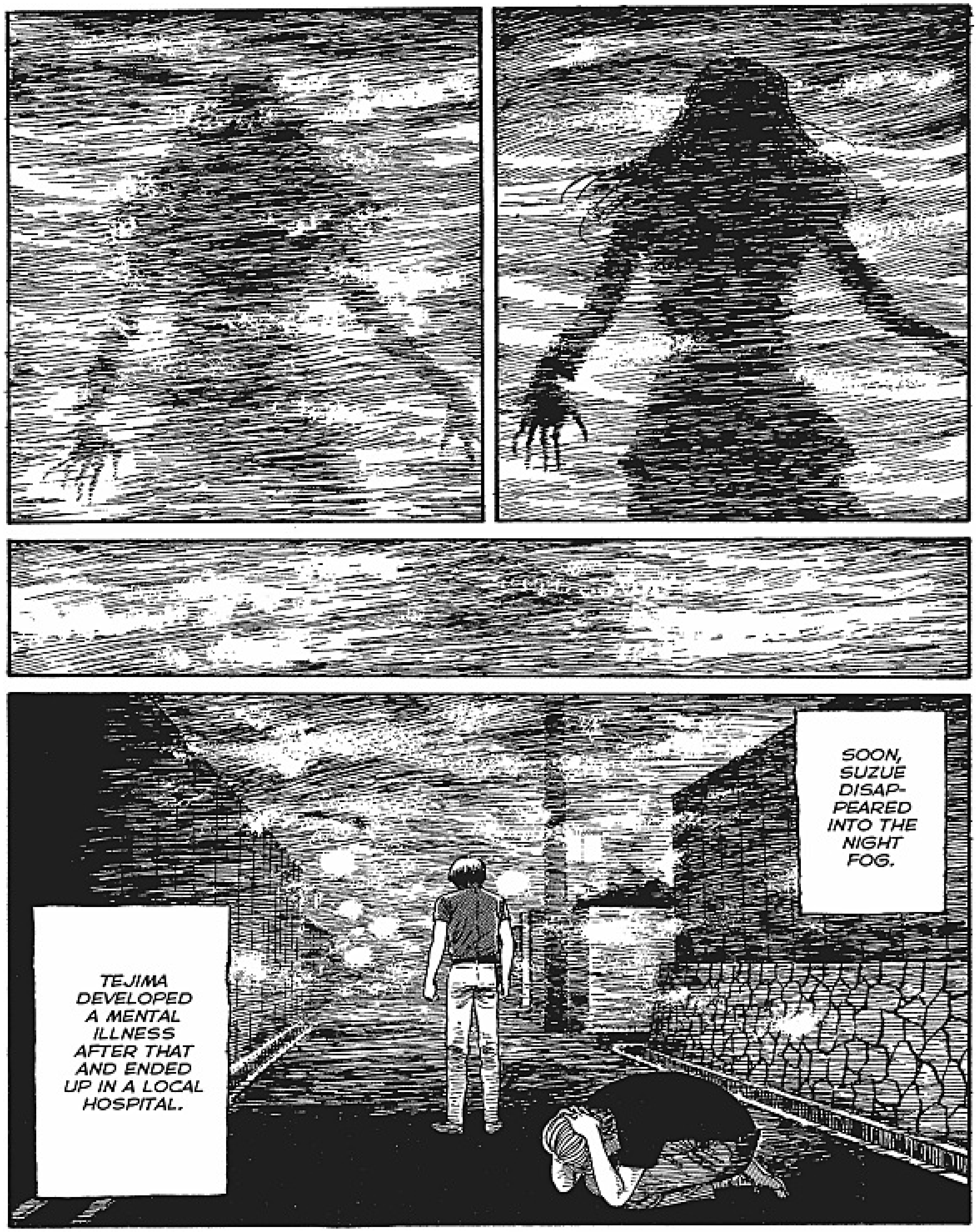

HUFF HUFF
TEJIMA?! WHAT ARE YOU DOING...? I THOUGHT YOU WENT HOME!
I WAS GOING TO, OKAY? I WANTED TO GET OUT OF THIS TOWN ASAP.
BUT WHEN I TRIED TO LEAVE, I COULDN'T.
THAT GIRL... SHE POSSESSED ME.
THAT SUZUE, THE ONE COVERED IN BLOOD...
I DON'T THINK I CAN LEAVE UNTIL SHE'S SATISFIED.
SHE... SHE *LOVES* YOU. SHE WANTS TO BE WITH YOU...
...IN THE AFTER-LIFE!
...
I ANSWERED HER, TOLD HER SHE'D FIND LOVE...
...SO IF YOU DON'T DIE, I'M IN REAL TROUBLE.
IF YOU DON'T GO TO THE AFTER-LIFE...


SO YOU'VE BEEN TRYING TO GET ME TO SNAP AND KILL MYSELF?
YOU STABBED MY EARS WITH THOSE TACKS?! AND PUT THE BLACK CLOTHES IN MY BED...
YEAH ...
I SPREAD THE RUMOR AT SCHOOL, TOO.
HAAAAH
HAAAAH
THAT BREATHING...
RYUSUKE! HELP ME! IT'S HER...
SHE'S GOING TO KILL ME...
HAAAAAAH

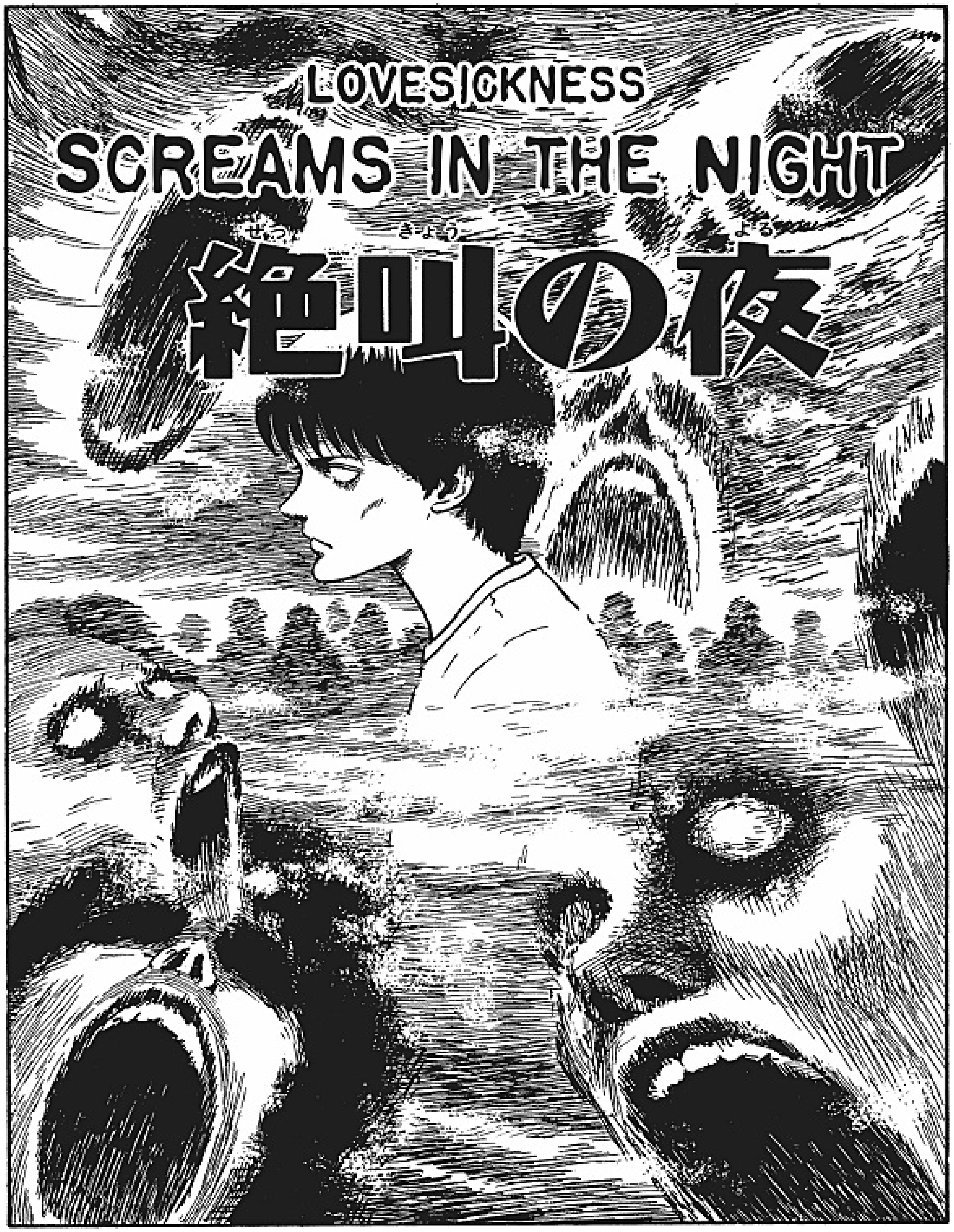

HAAAAH
HAAAAH
AAAAAAH! IT HUUUUURRRRTS! TEJIMAAAAAAA!
HURRYYYYY! BRING ME RYUSU-KEEEEEEEE!

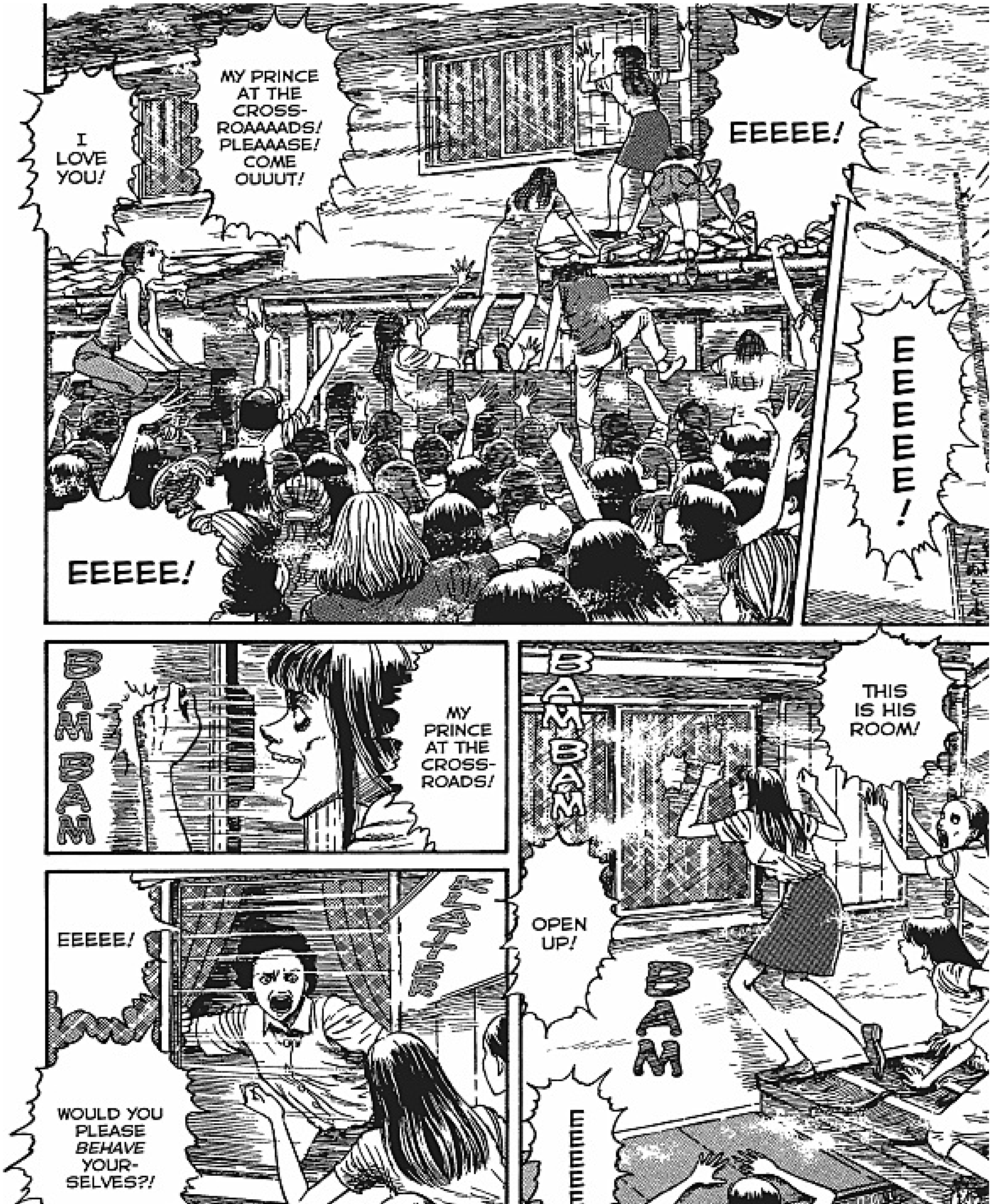

I-I BROUGHT HIM...
SEE? HE'S HERE. HE'S RIGHT HERE.
NOOOOO! THAT'S NOT HIIIIIM!
HE'S TALLER AND WEARS ALL BLACK. HE'S DEATHLY BEAUTIFUUUUUL!
AAAAAH! WHEN WILL YOU MAKE MY DREAM COME TRUUUUE?!
YOU LIED TO MEEEEE!
SUZUE ...
I AM RYUSUKE! HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN ME?!
I-I DIDN'T LIE TO YOU! EEEEAH!
HAAAAH
HAAAAH
YOU'RE CONFUSING ME WITH THE CROSSROADS BOY.
WHY ?!

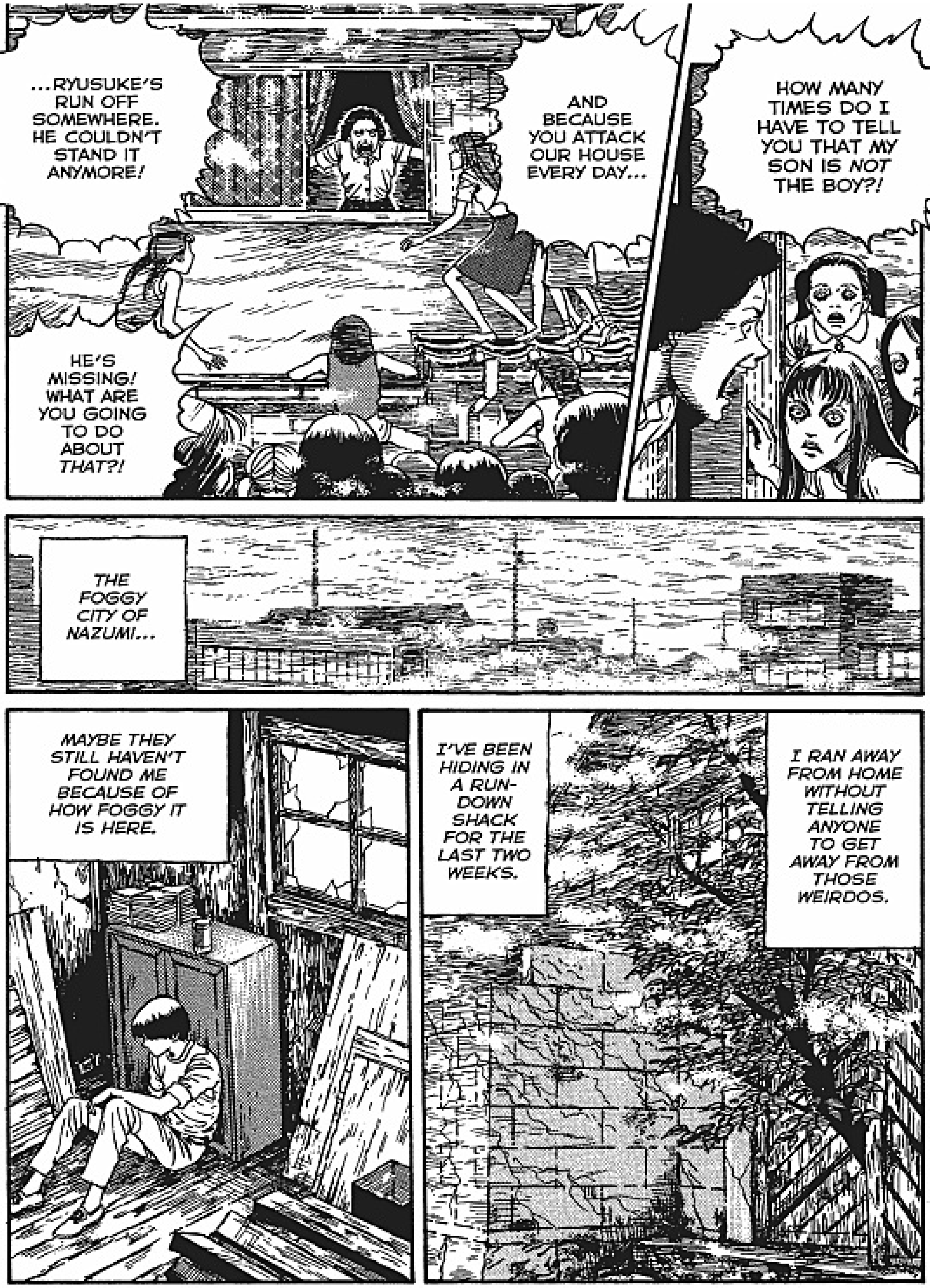

AAAAAAH! IT HURRRRRTS! HURRYYYYY!
BRING HIM TO ME NOOOOOOW! THAT BEAUTIFUL BOOOOOY!
RIGHT. YOU'D BEEN ACTING STRANGE EVER SINCE YOU MET HIM.
YOU STARTED SAYING YOU LIKED ME.
BUT IT WASN'T ME YOU WERE ATTRACTED TO. IT WAS *HIM!*
TEJIMA AND I CAN'T BRING HIM TO YOU!
PLEASE, SUZUE! REST IN PEACE ALREADY!

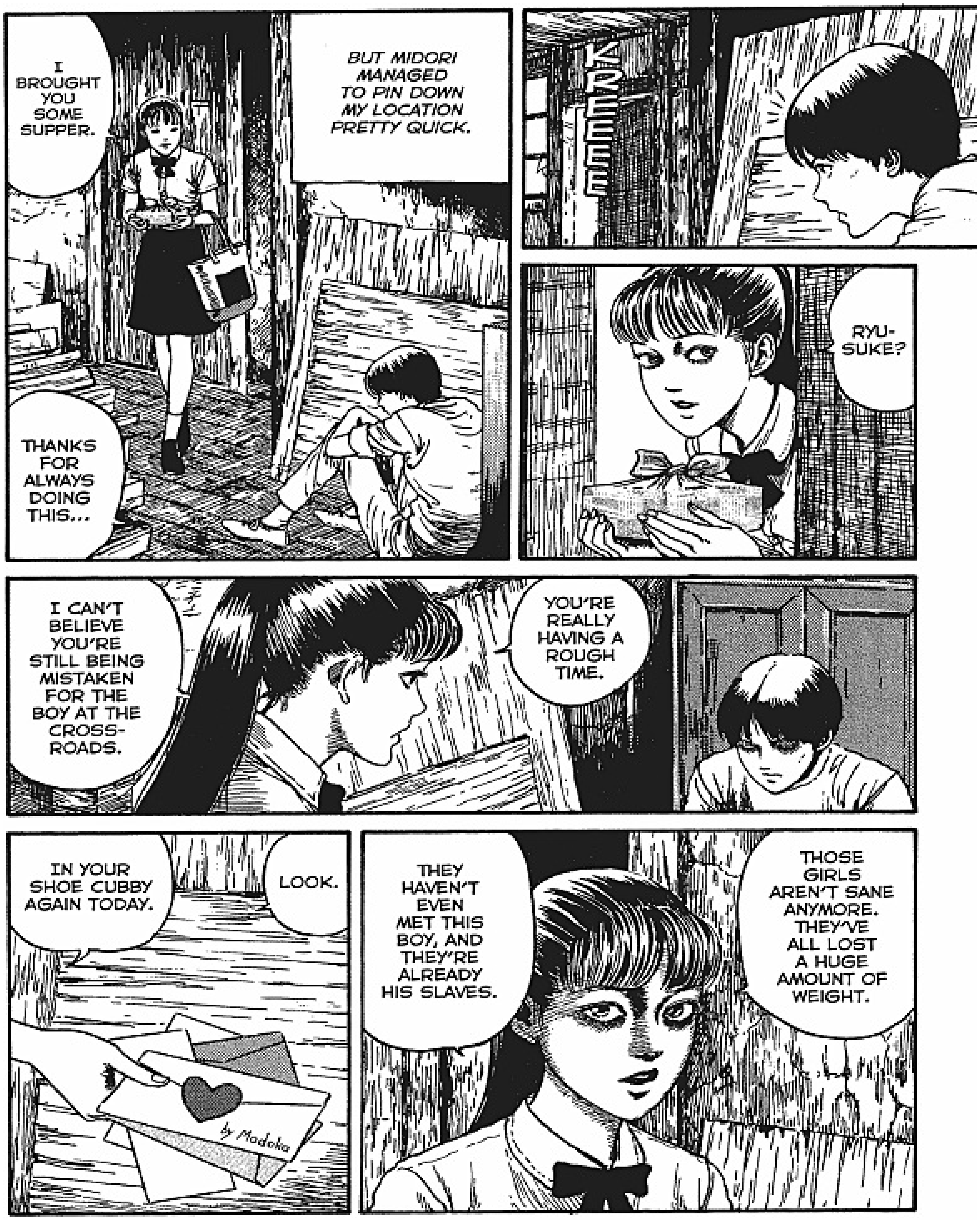

SOON, SUZUE DISAPPEARED INTO THE NIGHT FOG.
TEJIMA DEVELOPED A MENTAL ILLNESS AFTER THAT AND ENDED UP IN A LOCAL HOSPITAL.

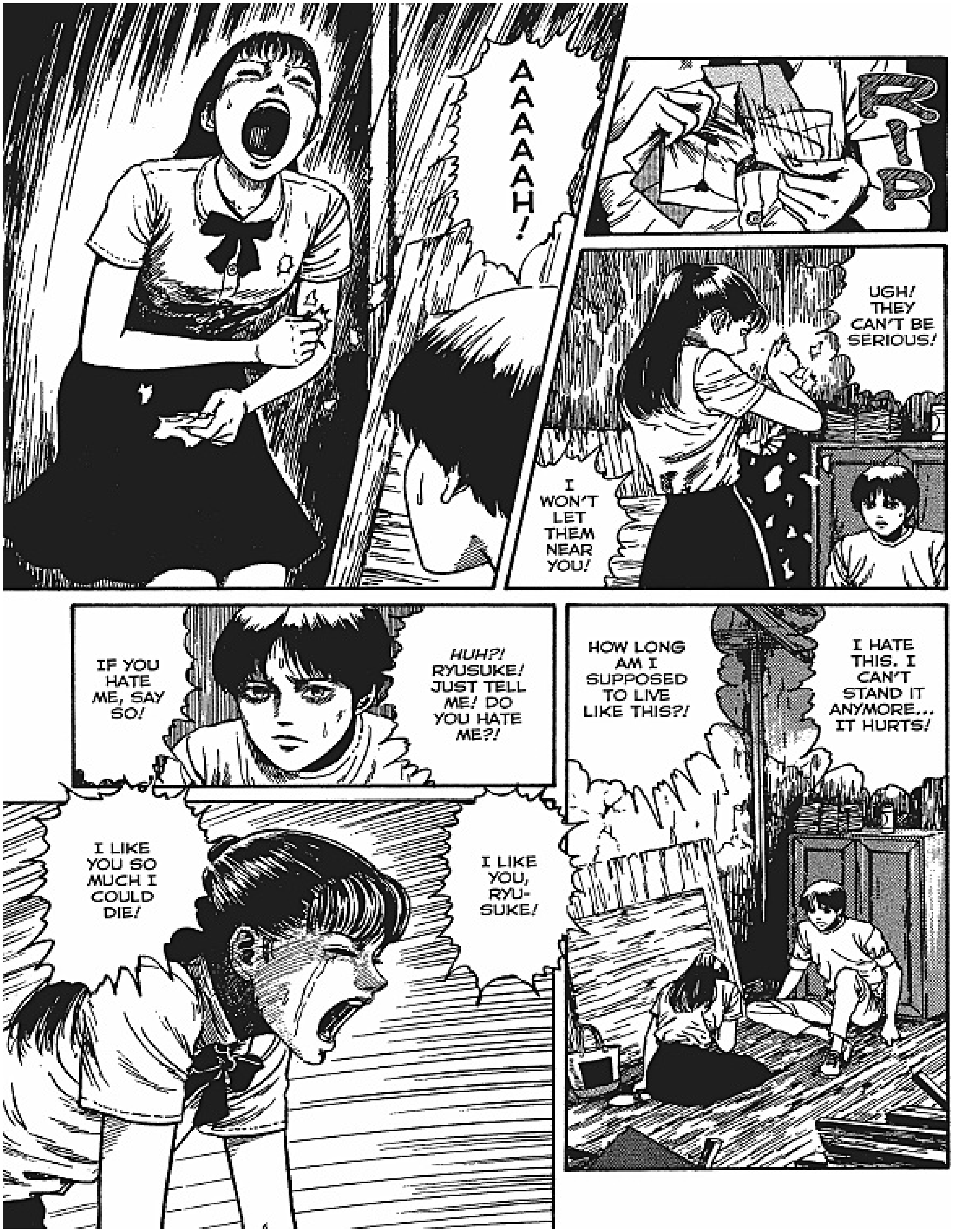
SHADOW/END

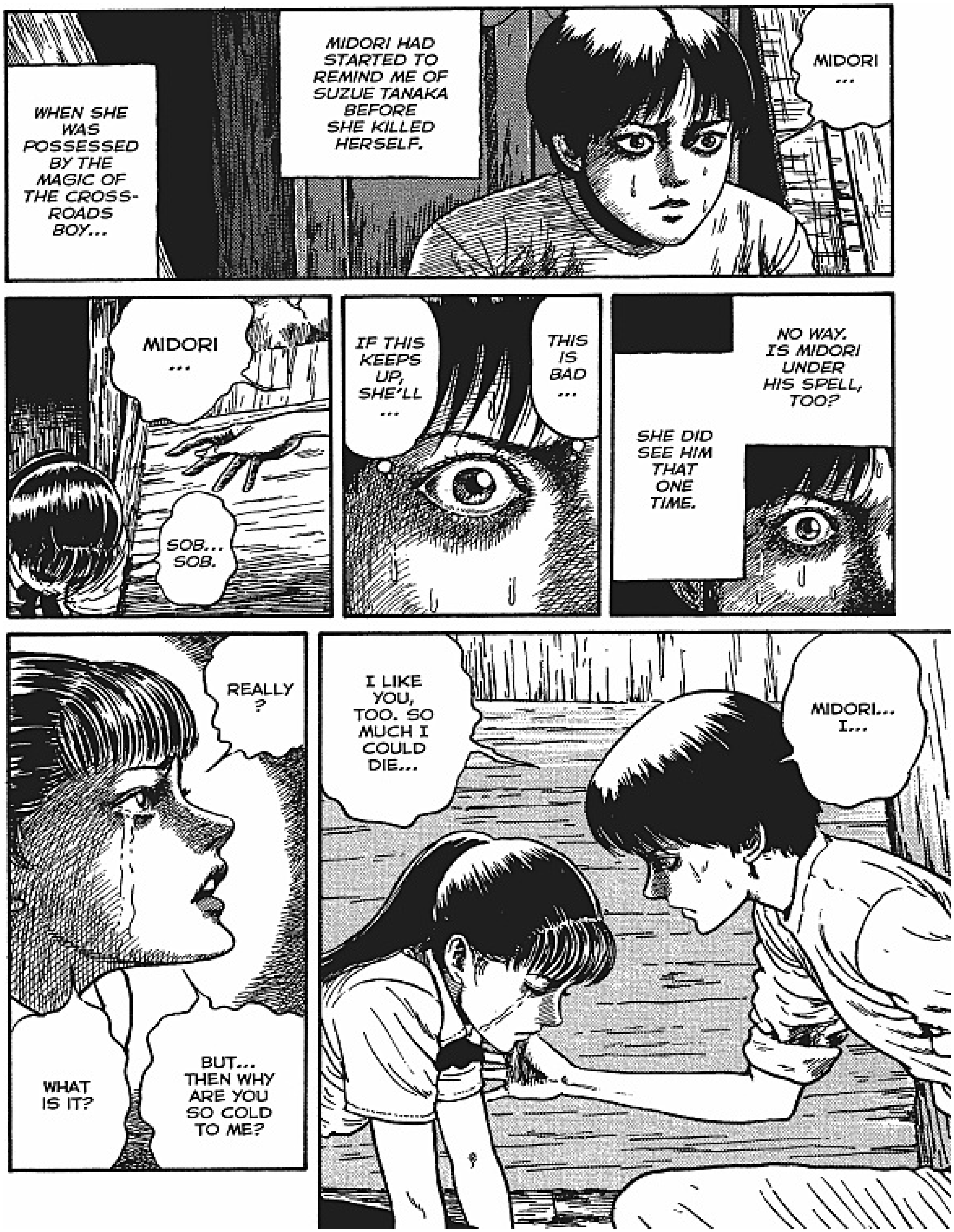

LOVESICKNESS
SCREAMS IN THE NIGHT
絶叫の夜

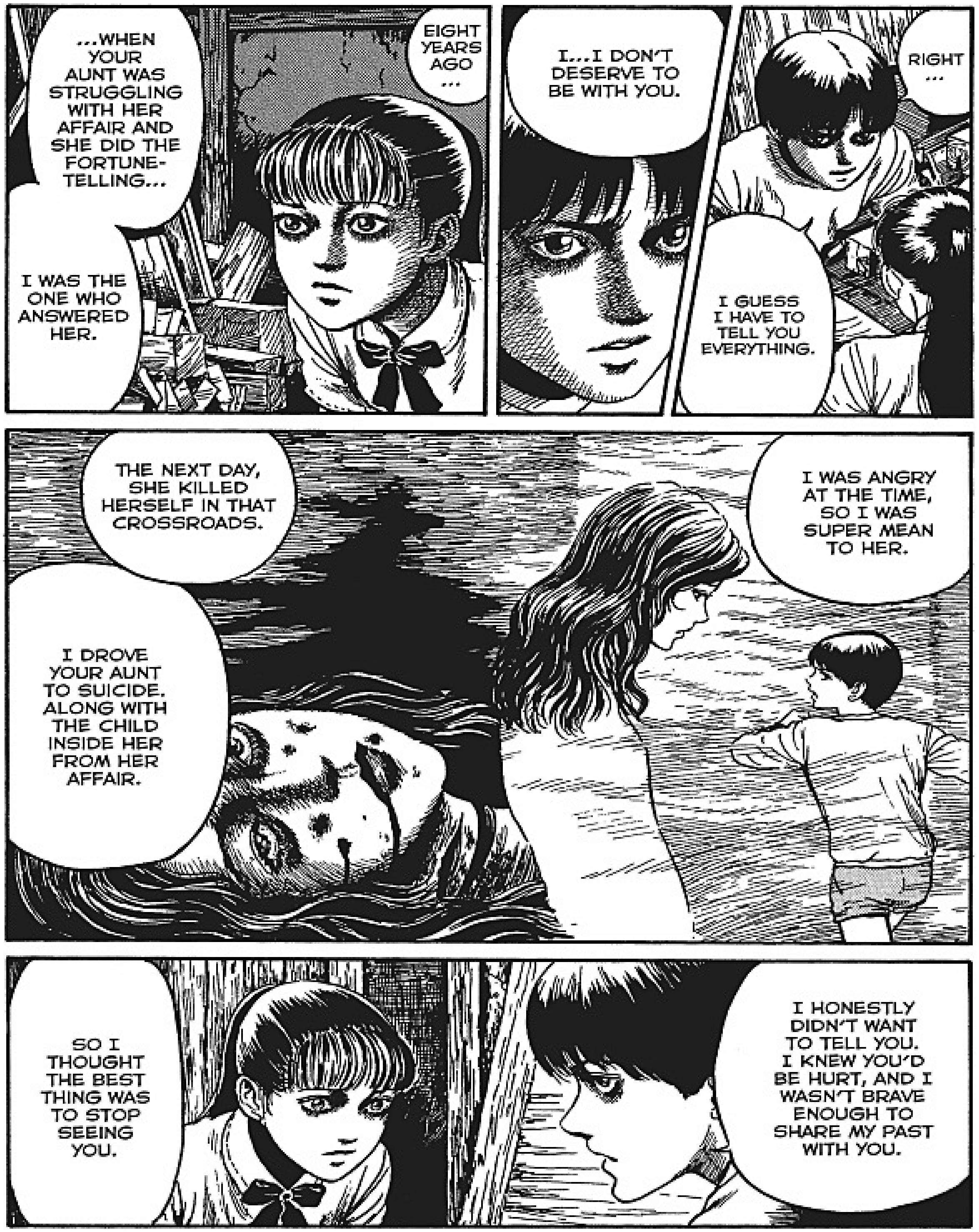

I LOVE YOU!
MY PRINCE AT THE CROSS-ROAAAADS! PLEAAASE! COME OUUUT!
EEEEE!
EEEEE!
EEEEEE!
BAM BAM BAM
MY PRINCE AT THE CROSS-ROADS!
EEEEE!
KLATTER
WOULD YOU PLEASE *BEHAVE* YOUR-SELVES?!
BAMBAM
THIS IS HIS ROOM!
OPEN UP!
BAM
EEEEE!

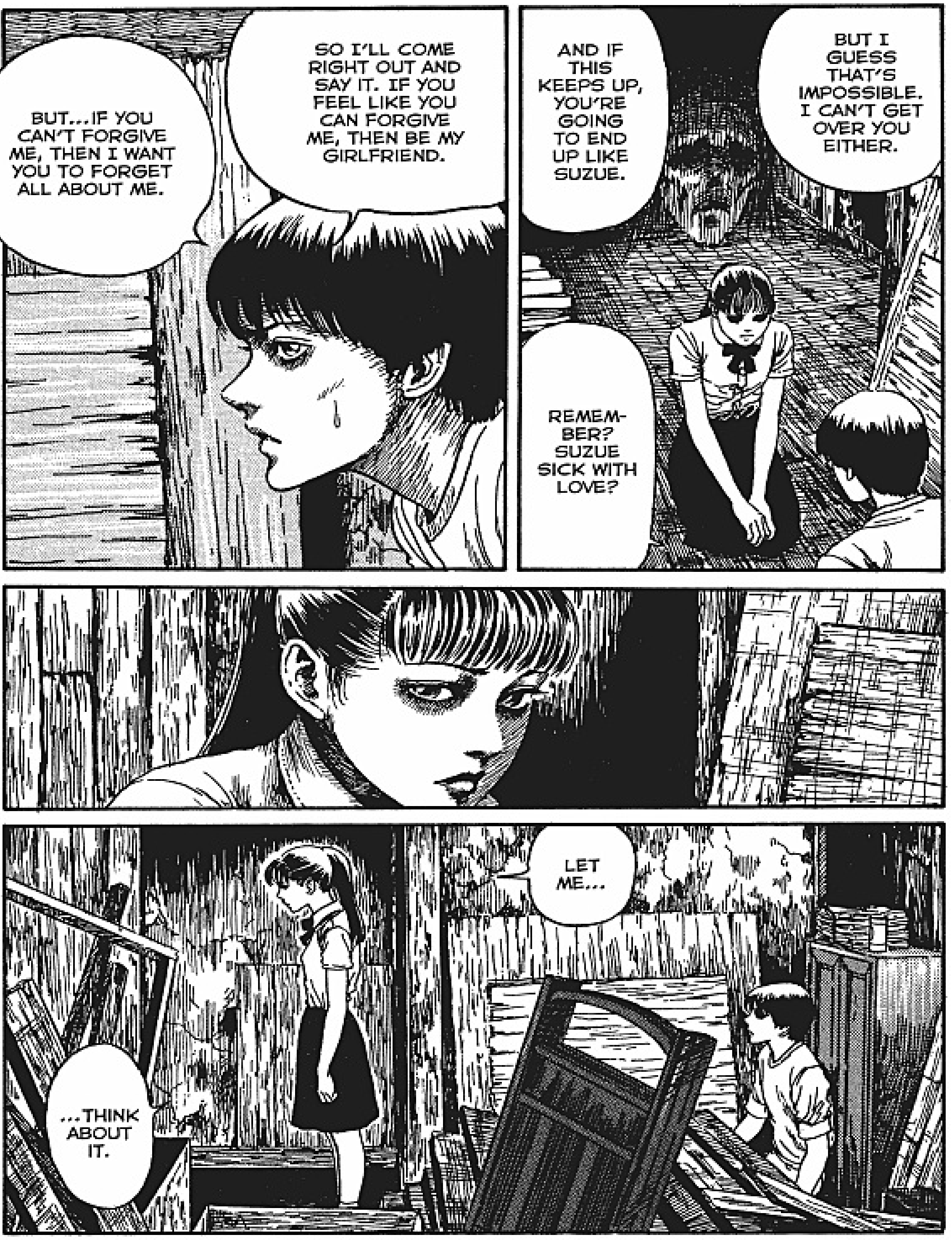

HOW MANY TIMES DO I HAVE TO TELL YOU THAT MY SON IS *NOT* THE BOY?!
AND BECAUSE YOU ATTACK OUR HOUSE EVERY DAY...
...RYUSUKE'S RUN OFF SOMEWHERE. HE COULDN'T STAND IT ANYMORE!
HE'S MISSING! WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO ABOUT *THAT*?!
THE FOGGY CITY OF NAZUMI...
I RAN AWAY FROM HOME WITHOUT TELLING ANYONE TO GET AWAY FROM THOSE WEIRDOS.
I'VE BEEN HIDING IN A RUN-DOWN SHACK FOR THE LAST TWO WEEKS.
MAYBE THEY STILL HAVEN'T FOUND ME BECAUSE OF HOW FOGGY IT IS HERE.

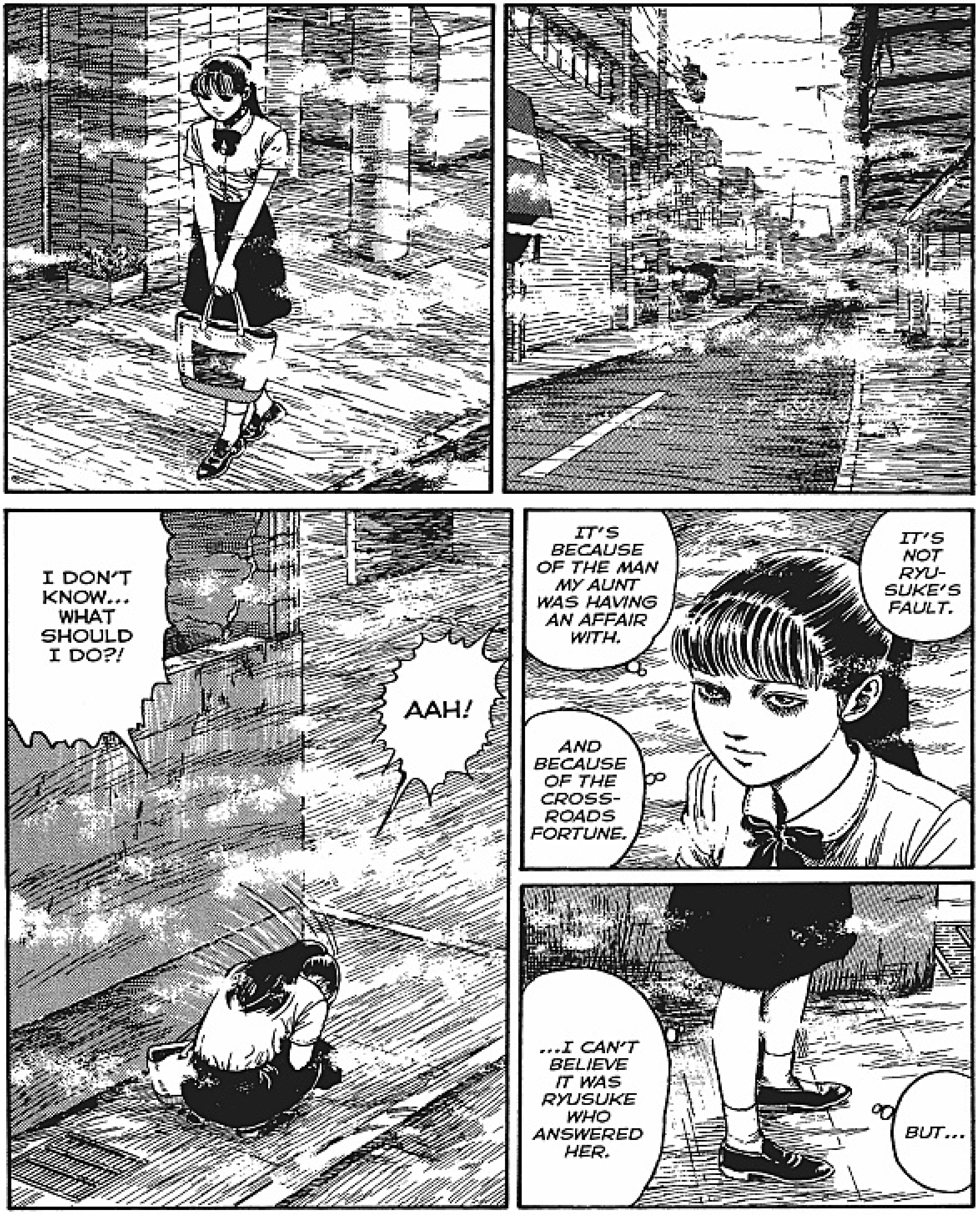

KREEE
RYU-SUKE?
BUT MIDORI MANAGED TO PIN DOWN MY LOCATION PRETTY QUICK.
I BROUGHT YOU SOME SUPPER.
THANKS FOR ALWAYS DOING THIS...
YOU'RE REALLY HAVING A ROUGH TIME.
I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU'RE STILL BEING MISTAKEN FOR THE BOY AT THE CROSS-ROADS.
THOSE GIRLS AREN'T SANE ANYMORE. THEY'VE ALL LOST A HUGE AMOUNT OF WEIGHT.
THEY HAVEN'T EVEN MET THIS BOY, AND THEY'RE ALREADY HIS SLAVES.
LOOK.
IN YOUR SHOE CUBBY AGAIN TODAY.
by Madoka

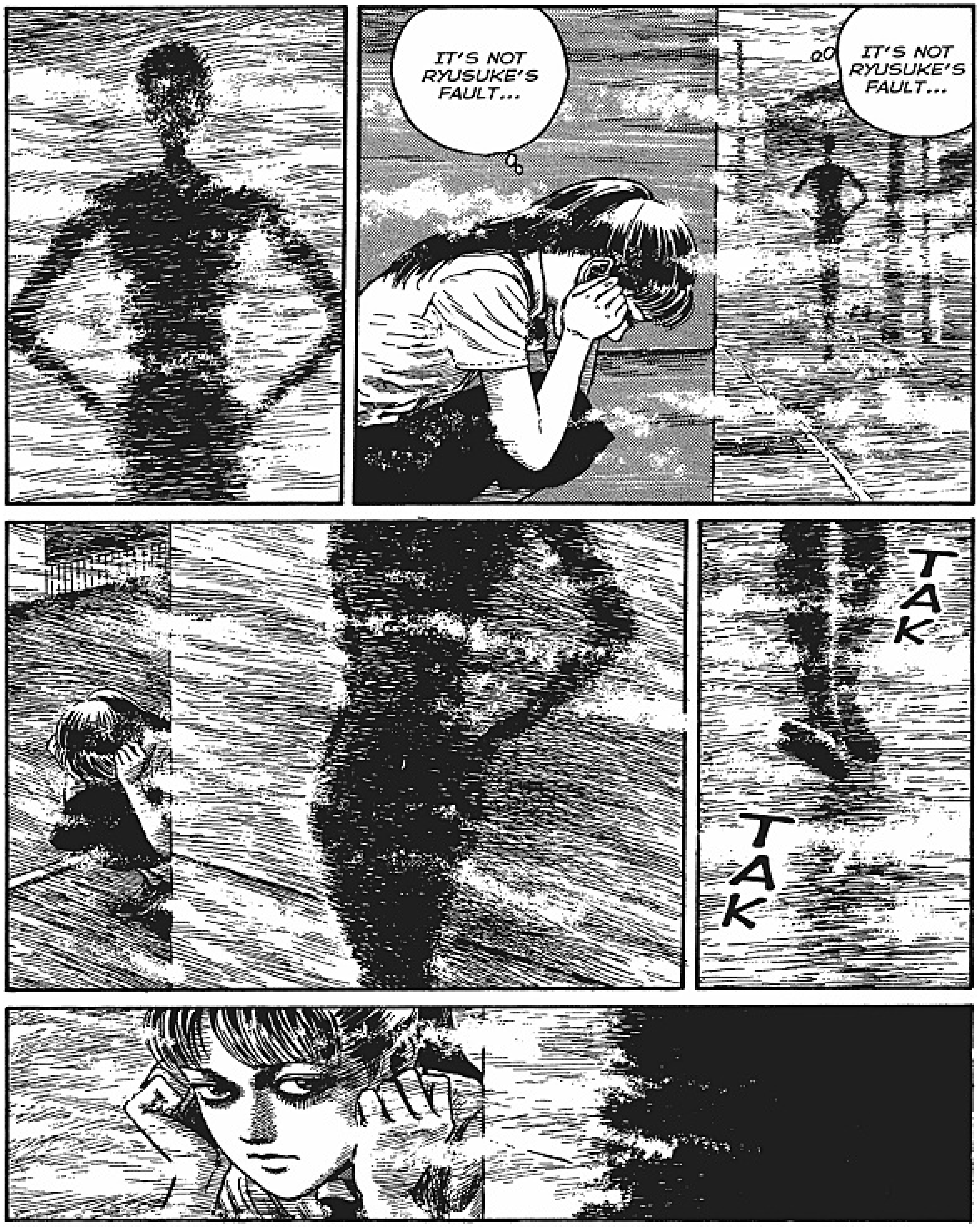

RIP
UGH! THEY CAN'T BE SERIOUS!
I WON'T LET THEM NEAR YOU!
AAAAAH!
I HATE THIS. I CAN'T STAND IT ANYMORE... IT HURTS!
HOW LONG AM I SUPPOSED TO LIVE LIKE THIS?!
HUH?! RYUSUKE! JUST TELL ME! DO YOU HATE ME?!
IF YOU HATE ME, SAY SO!
I LIKE YOU, RYU-SUKE!
I LIKE YOU SO MUCH I COULD DIE!

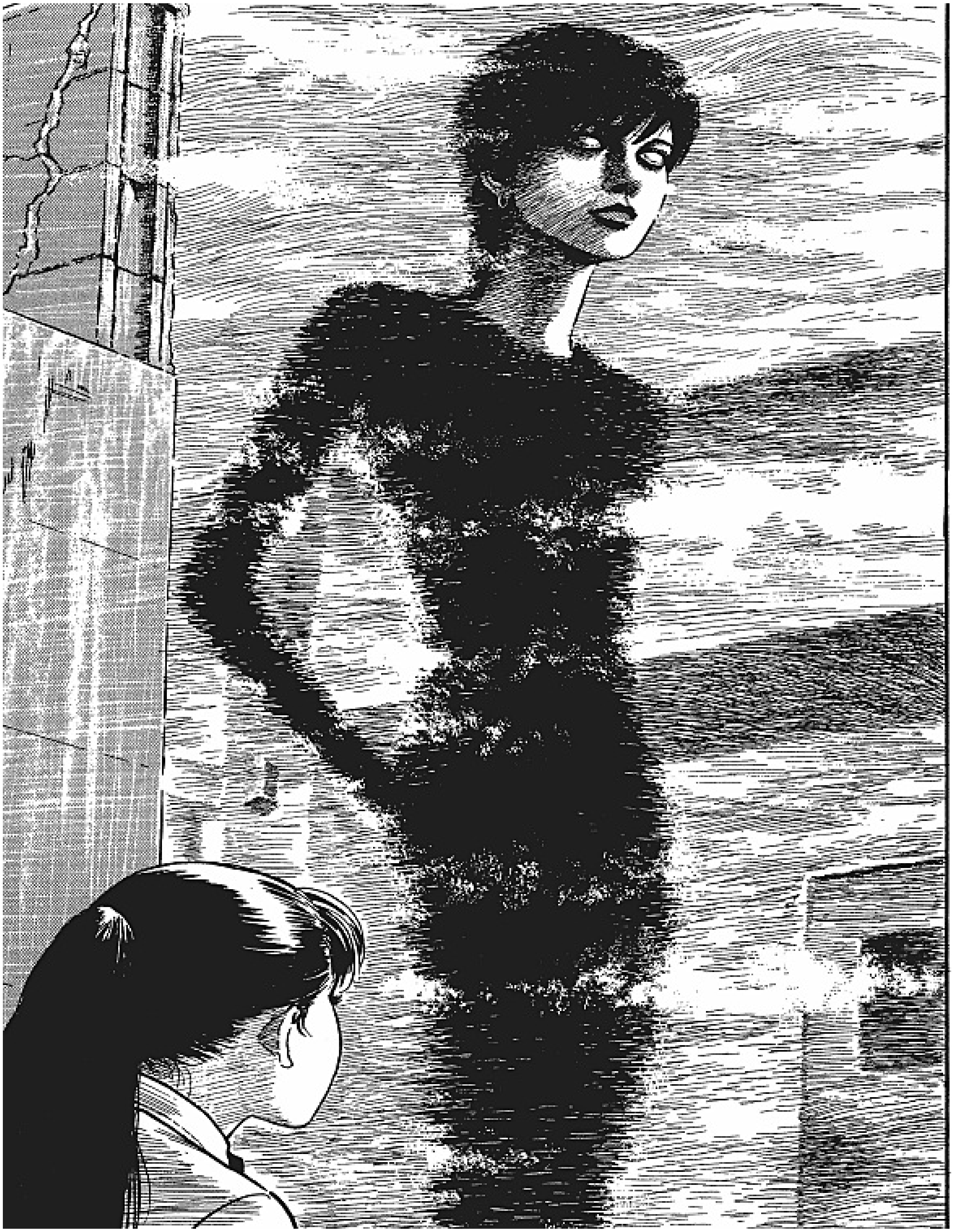

MIDORI...
MIDORI HAD STARTED TO REMIND ME OF SUZUE TANAKA BEFORE SHE KILLED HERSELF.
WHEN SHE WAS POSSESSED BY THE MAGIC OF THE CROSS-ROADS BOY...
NO WAY. IS MIDORI UNDER HIS SPELL, TOO?
SHE DID SEE HIM THAT ONE TIME.
THIS IS BAD...
IF THIS KEEPS UP, SHE'LL...
MIDORI...
SOB... SOB.
MIDORI... I...
I LIKE YOU, TOO. SO MUCH I COULD DIE...
REALLY?
BUT... THEN WHY ARE YOU SO COLD TO ME?
WHAT IS IT?

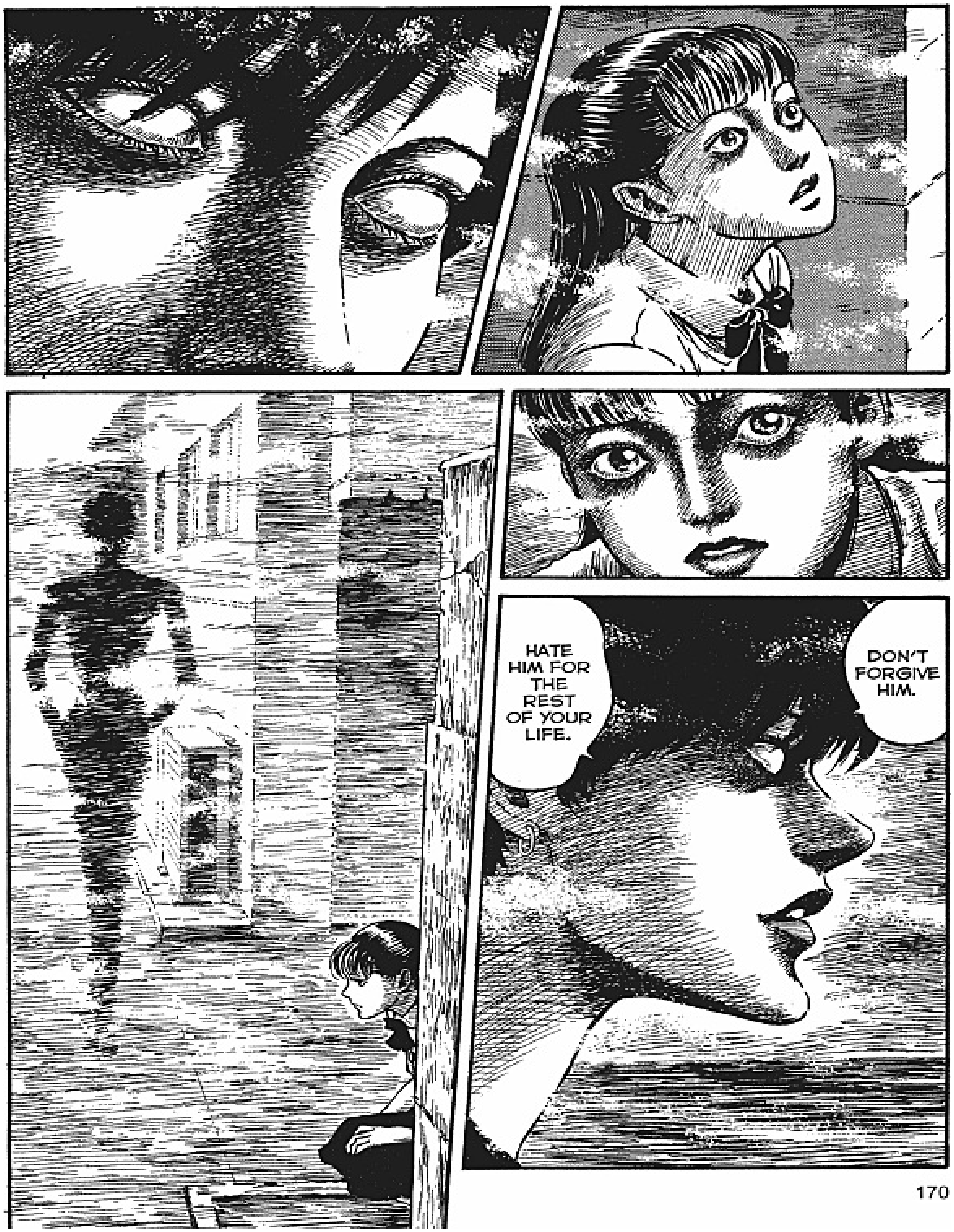

RIGHT ...
I GUESS I HAVE TO TELL YOU EVERYTHING.
I...I DON'T DESERVE TO BE WITH YOU.
EIGHT YEARS AGO ...
...WHEN YOUR AUNT WAS STRUGGLING WITH HER AFFAIR AND SHE DID THE FORTUNE-TELLING...
I WAS THE ONE WHO ANSWERED HER.
I WAS ANGRY AT THE TIME, SO I WAS SUPER MEAN TO HER.
THE NEXT DAY, SHE KILLED HERSELF IN THAT CROSSROADS.
I DROVE YOUR AUNT TO SUICIDE. ALONG WITH THE CHILD INSIDE HER FROM HER AFFAIR.
I HONESTLY DIDN'T WANT TO TELL YOU. I KNEW YOU'D BE HURT, AND I WASN'T BRAVE ENOUGH TO SHARE MY PAST WITH YOU.
SO I THOUGHT THE BEST THING WAS TO STOP SEEING YOU.

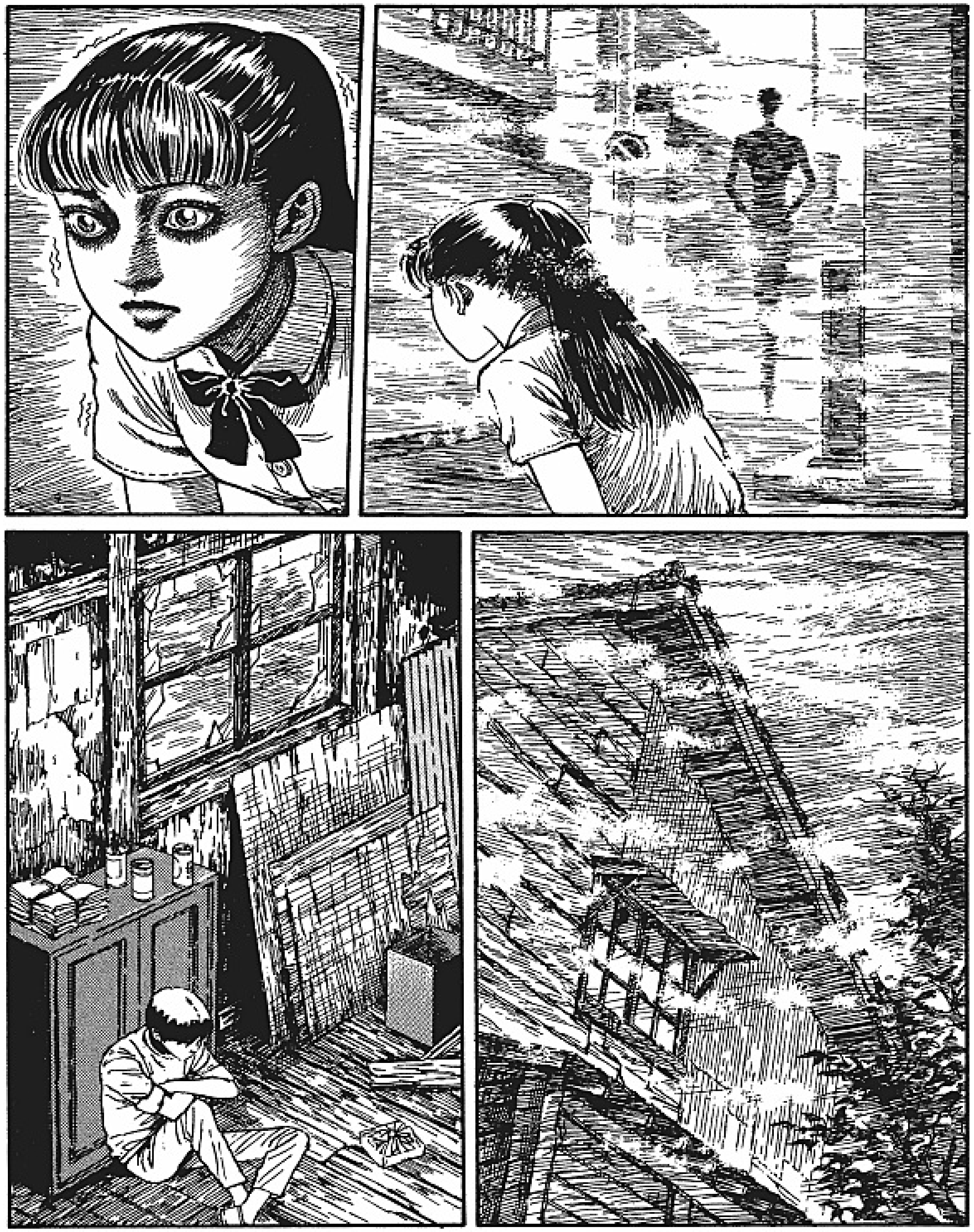

BUT I GUESS THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE. I CAN'T GET OVER YOU EITHER.
AND IF THIS KEEPS UP, YOU'RE GOING TO END UP LIKE SUZUE.
REMEMBER? SUZUE SICK WITH LOVE?
SO I'LL COME RIGHT OUT AND SAY IT. IF YOU FEEL LIKE YOU CAN FORGIVE ME, THEN BE MY GIRLFRIEND.
BUT...IF YOU CAN'T FORGIVE ME, THEN I WANT YOU TO FORGET ALL ABOUT ME.
LET ME...
...THINK ABOUT IT.

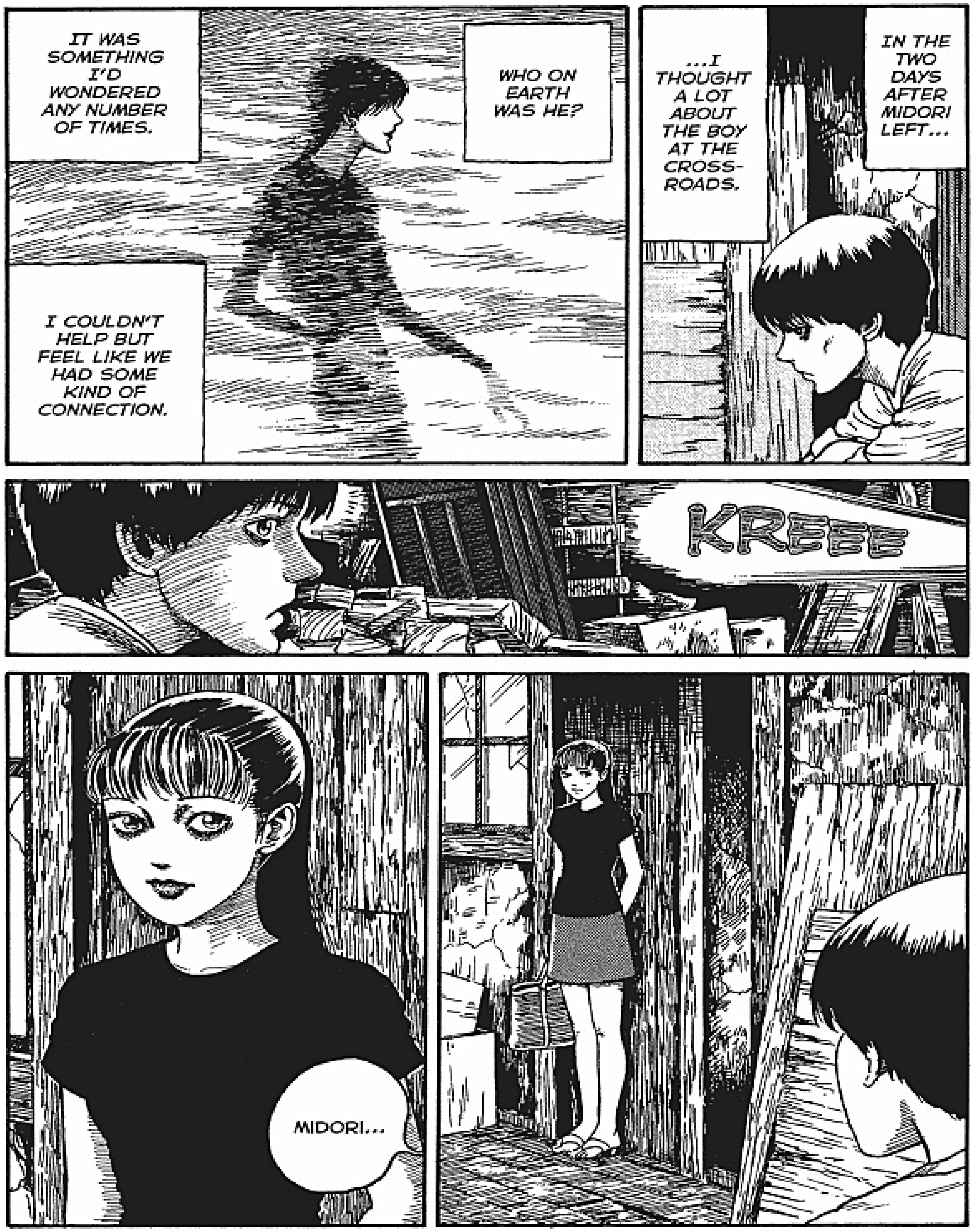

IT'S NOT RYUSUKE'S FAULT.
IT'S BECAUSE OF THE MAN MY AUNT WAS HAVING AN AFFAIR WITH.
AND BECAUSE OF THE CROSSROADS FORTUNE.
BUT...
...I CAN'T BELIEVE IT WAS RYUSUKE WHO ANSWERED HER.
AAH!
I DON'T KNOW... WHAT SHOULD I DO?!

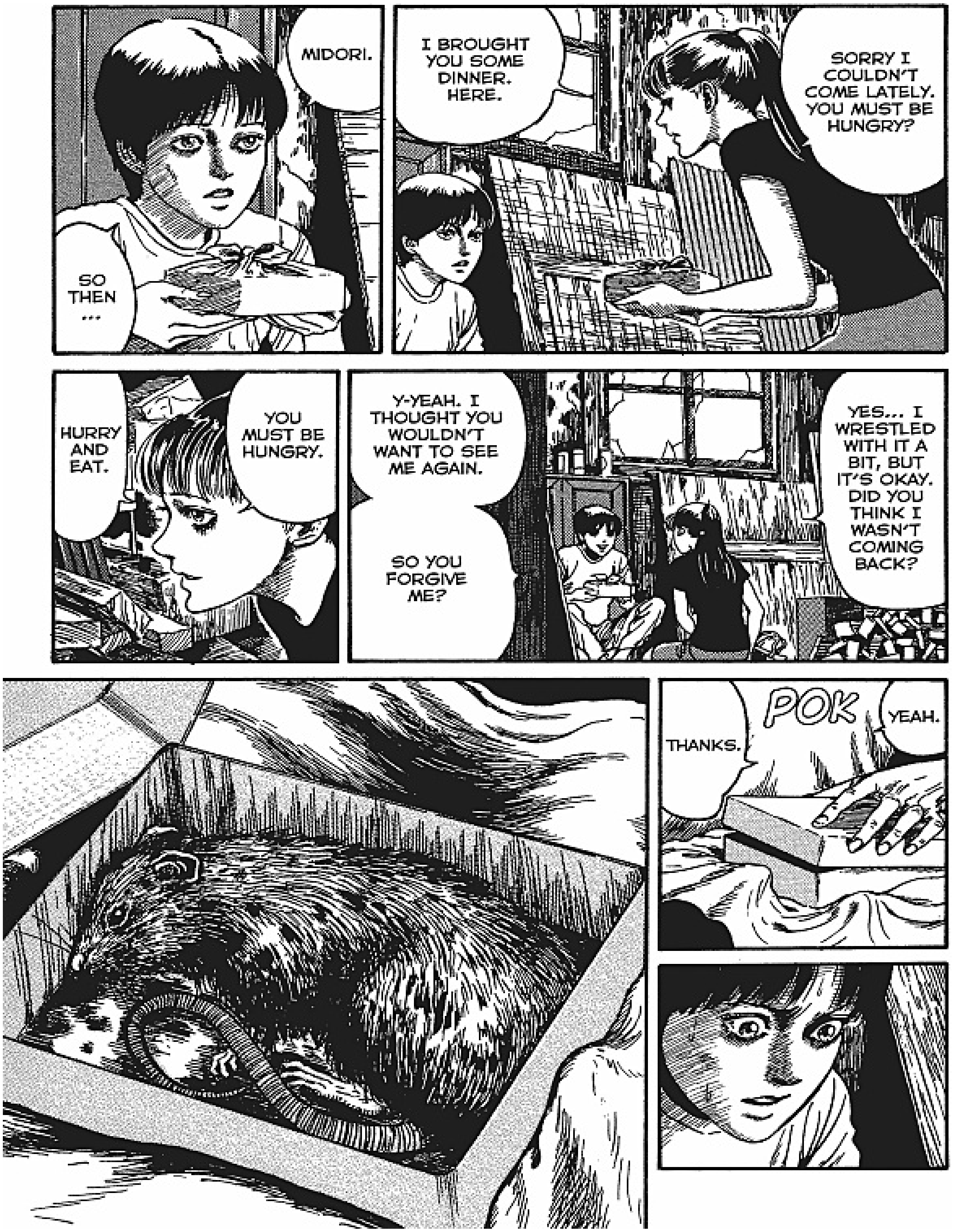

IT'S NOT RYUSUKE'S FAULT...
IT'S NOT RYUSUKE'S FAULT...
TAK
TAK

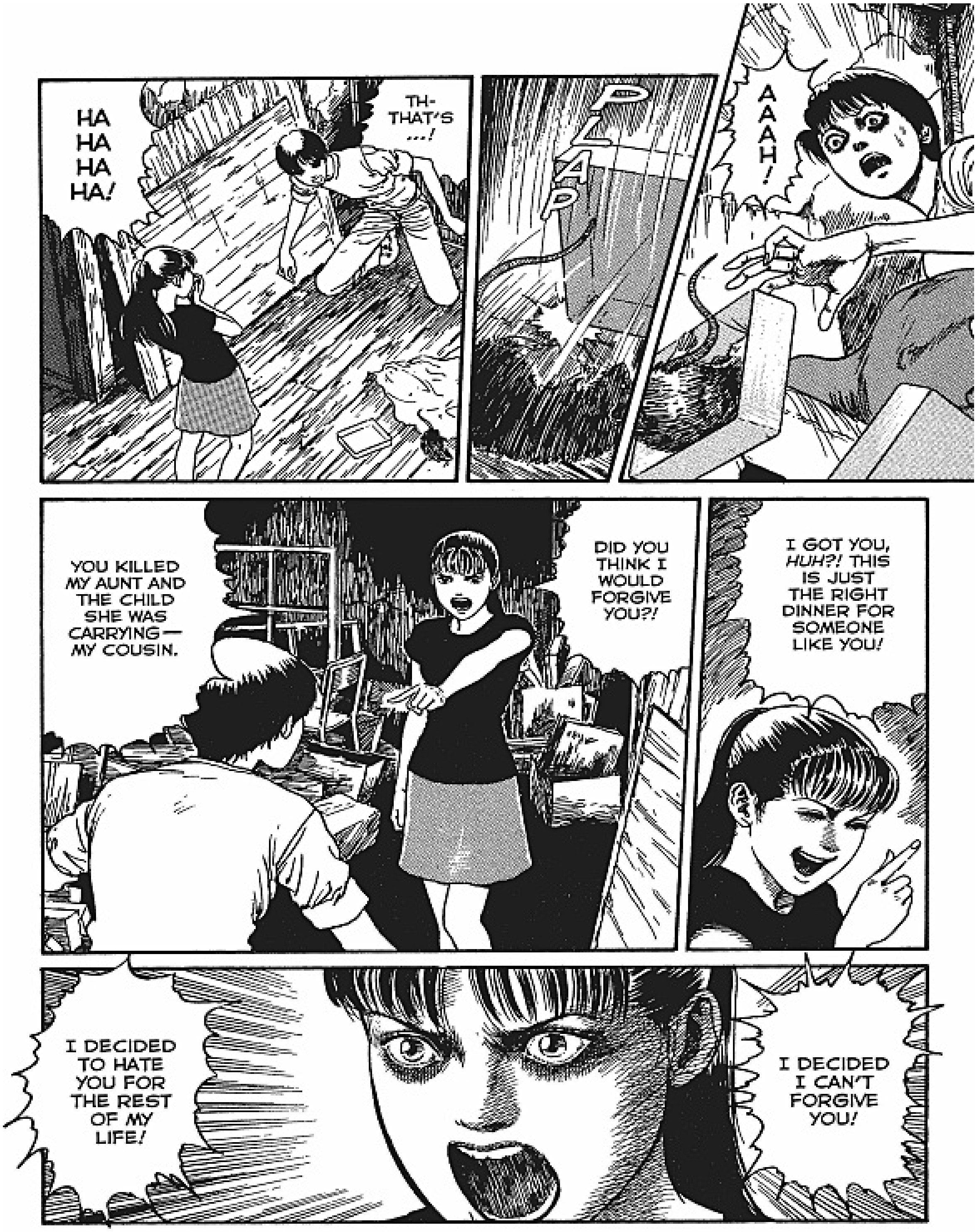


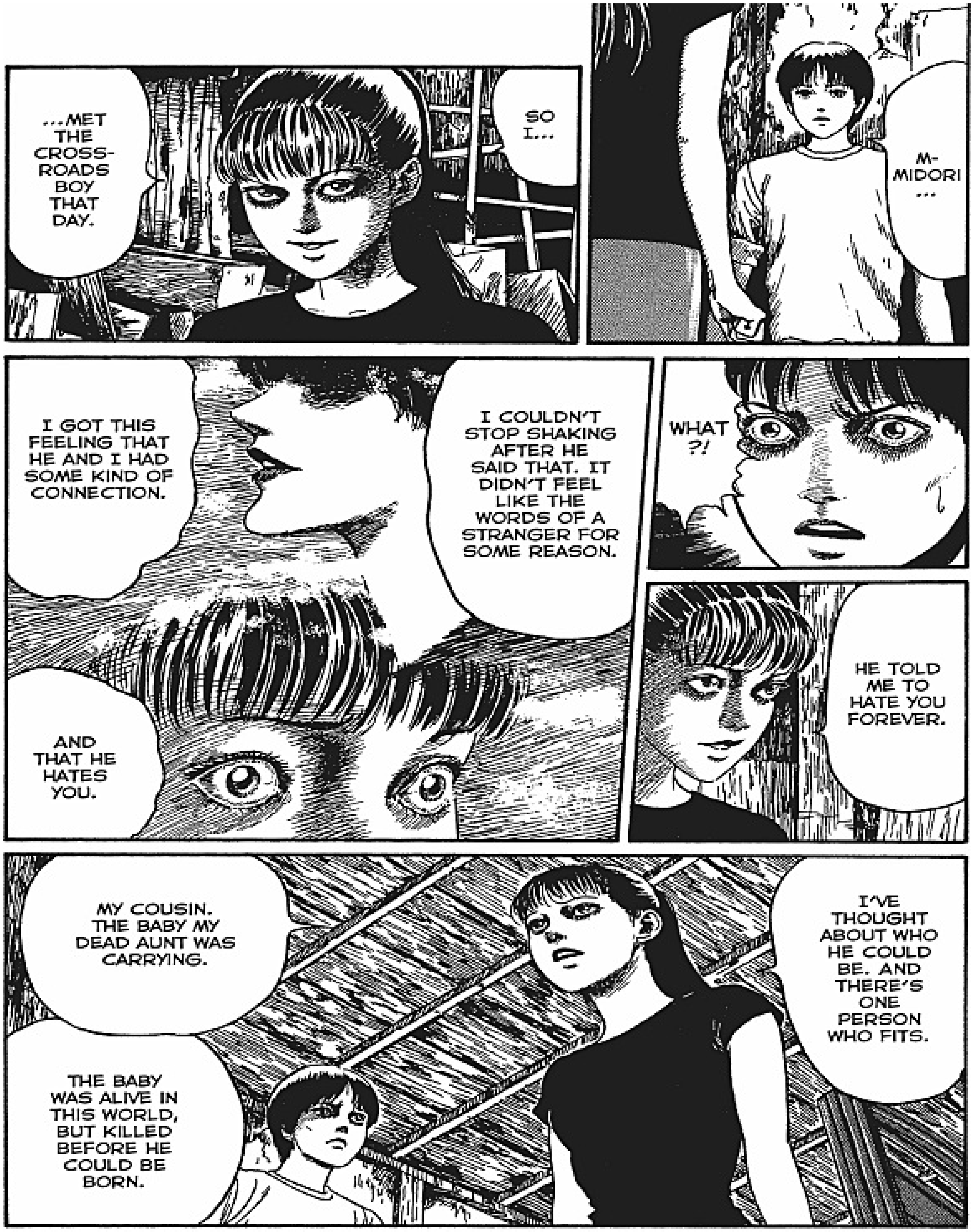

DON'T FORGIVE HIM.
HATE HIM FOR THE REST OF YOUR LIFE.

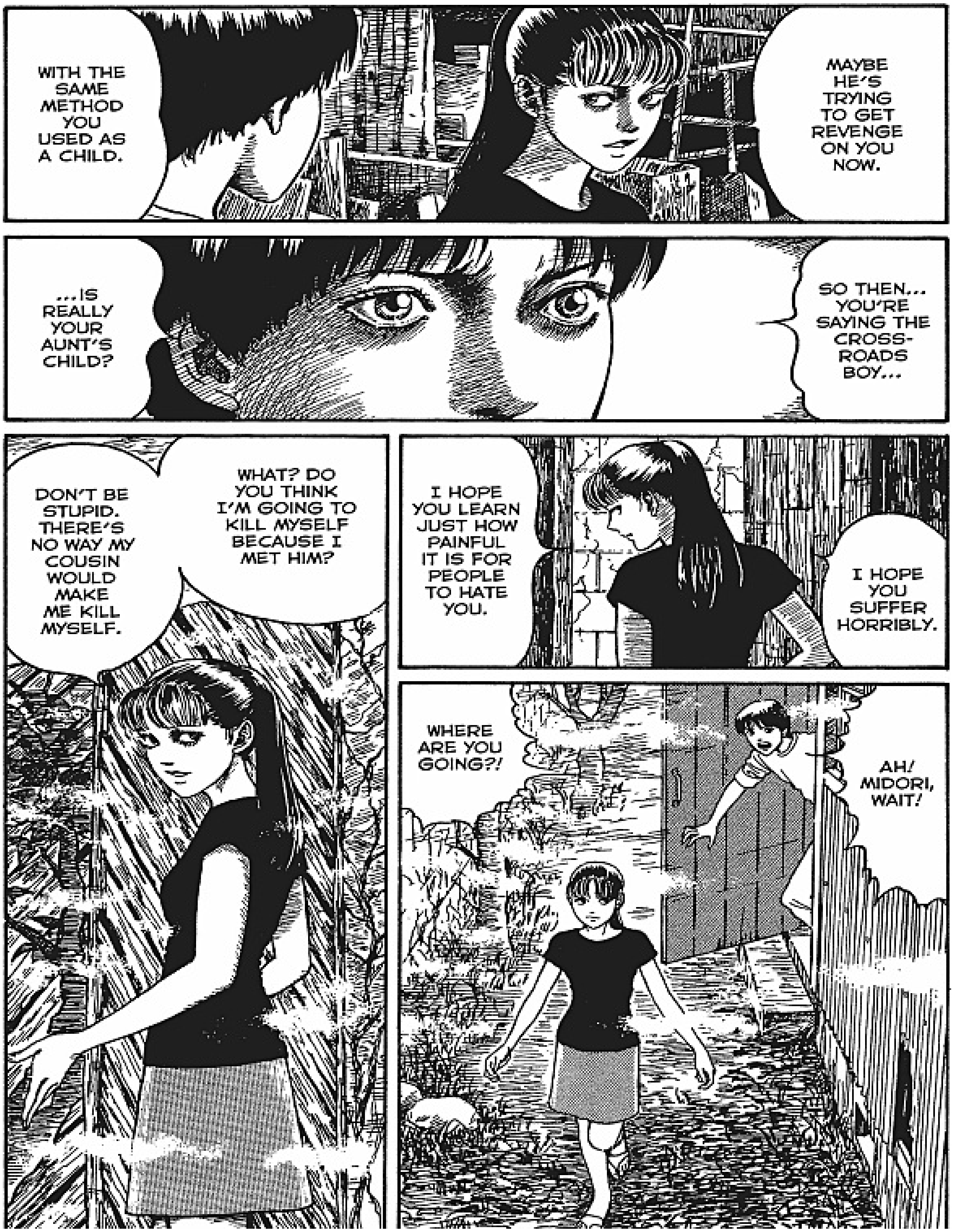


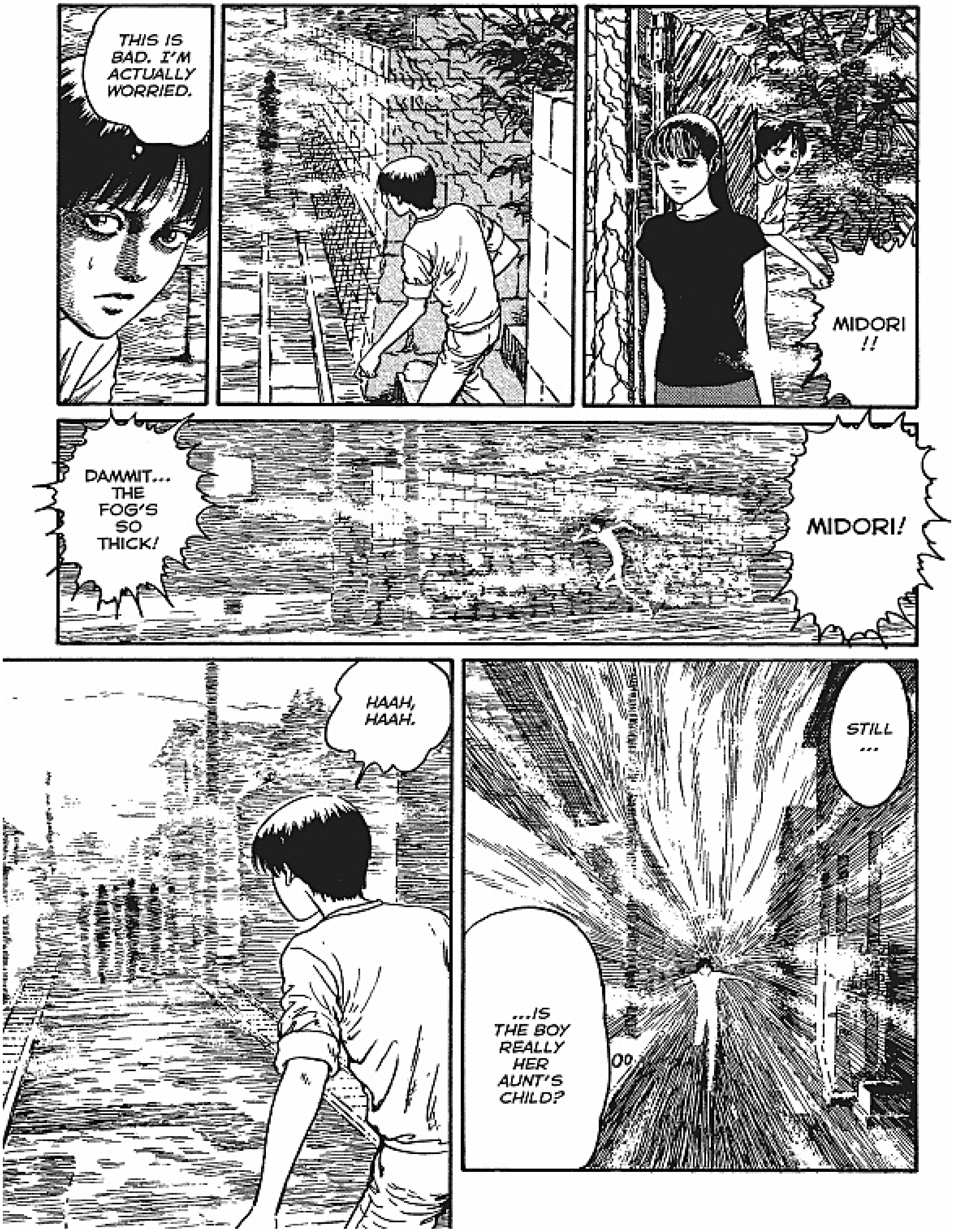

IN THE TWO DAYS AFTER MIDORI LEFT...
...I THOUGHT A LOT ABOUT THE BOY AT THE CROSS-ROADS.
WHO ON EARTH WAS HE?
IT WAS SOMETHING I'D WONDERED ANY NUMBER OF TIMES.
I COULDN'T HELP BUT FEEL LIKE WE HAD SOME KIND OF CONNECTION.
KREEE
MIDORI...

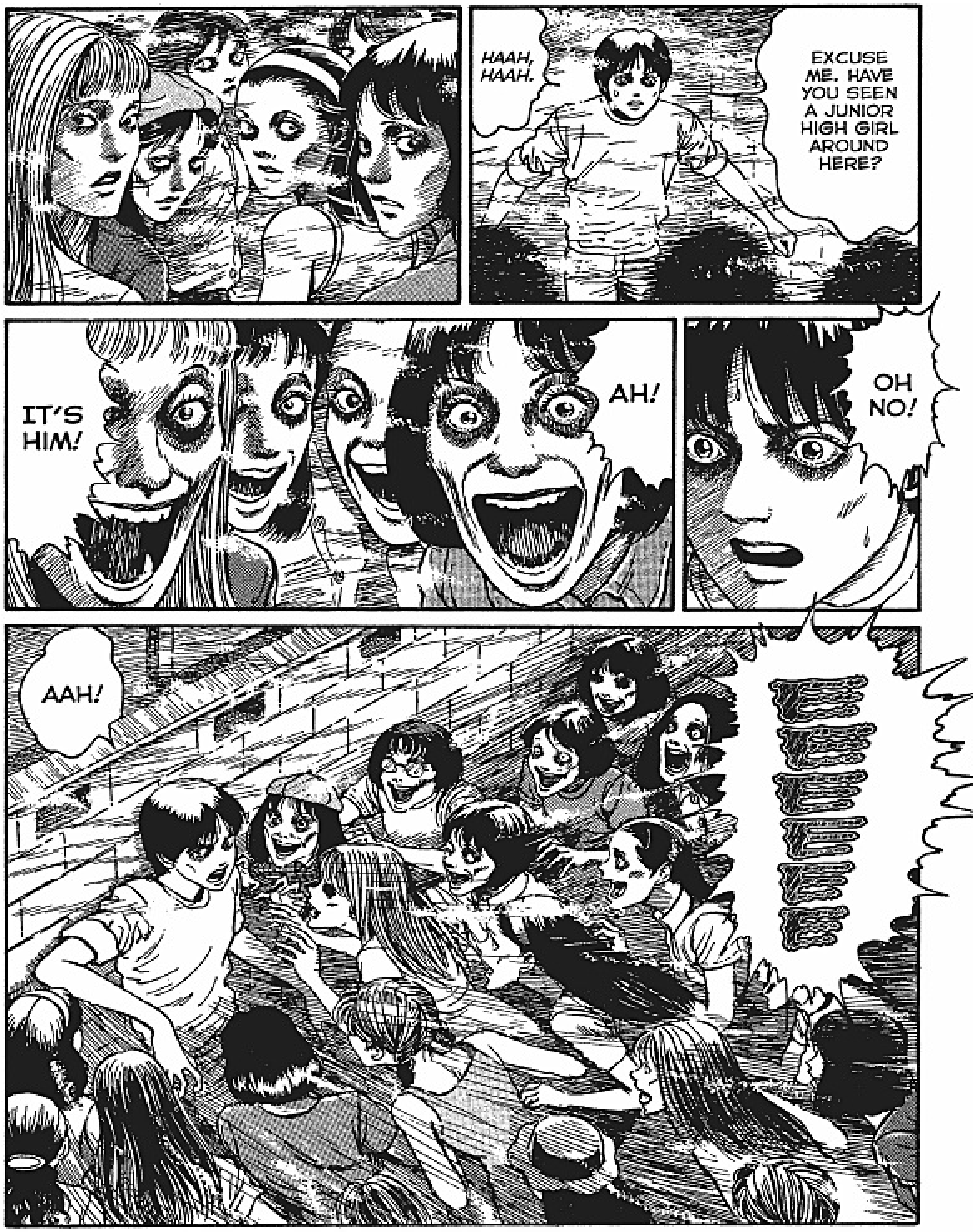

SORRY I COULDN'T COME LATELY. YOU MUST BE HUNGRY?
I BROUGHT YOU SOME DINNER. HERE.
MIDORI.
SO THEN ...
YES... I WRESTLED WITH IT A BIT, BUT IT'S OKAY. DID YOU THINK I WASN'T COMING BACK?
Y-YEAH. I THOUGHT YOU WOULDN'T WANT TO SEE ME AGAIN.
SO YOU FORGIVE ME?
YOU MUST BE HUNGRY.
HURRY AND EAT.
YEAH.
POK
THANKS.

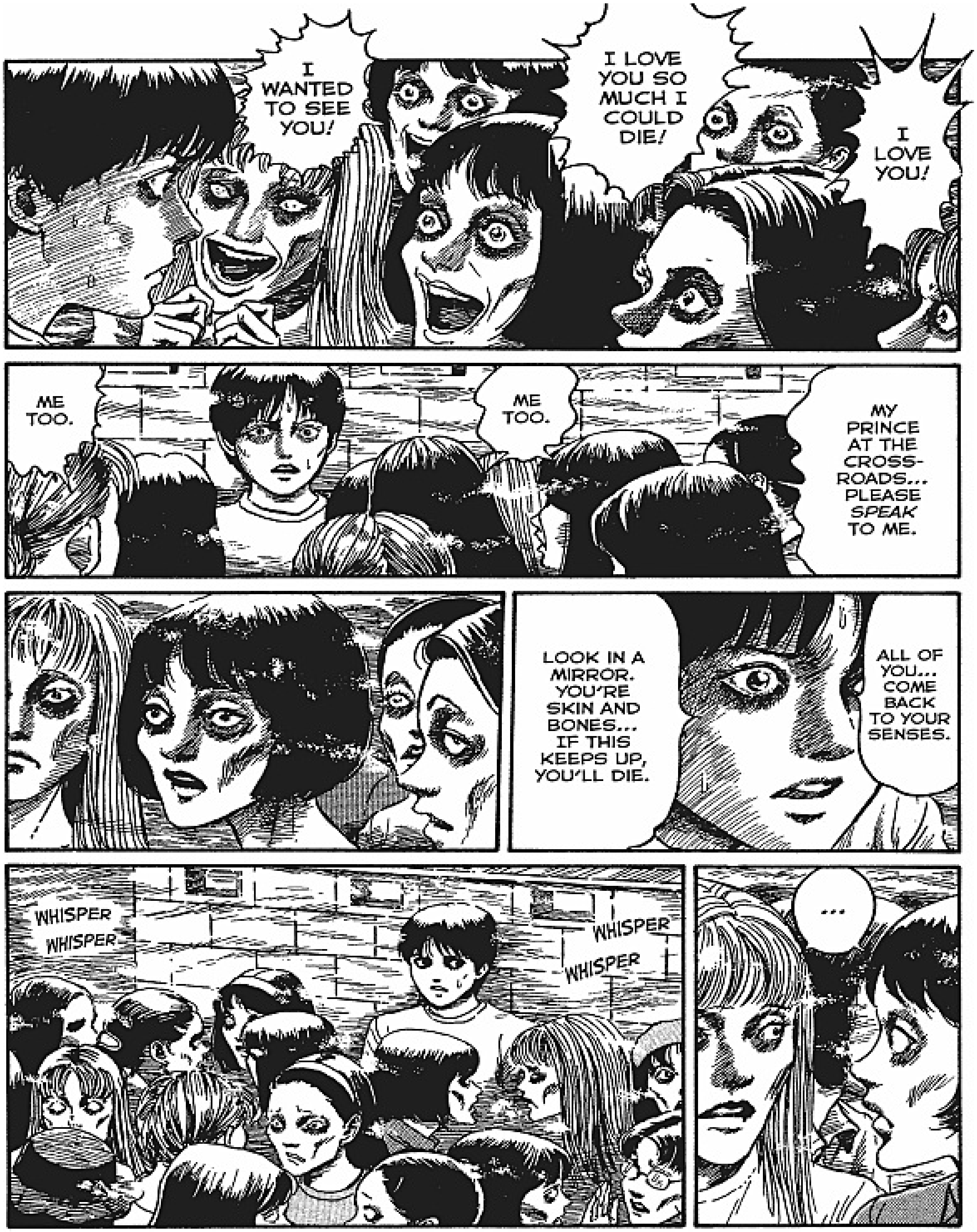

AAAH!
PLAP
TH- THAT'S ...!
HA HA HA HA!
I GOT YOU, *HUH?!* THIS IS JUST THE RIGHT DINNER FOR SOMEONE LIKE YOU!
DID YOU THINK I WOULD FORGIVE YOU?!
YOU KILLED MY AUNT AND THE CHILD SHE WAS CARRYING— MY COUSIN.
I DECIDED I CAN'T FORGIVE YOU!
I DECIDED TO HATE YOU FOR THE REST OF MY LIFE!

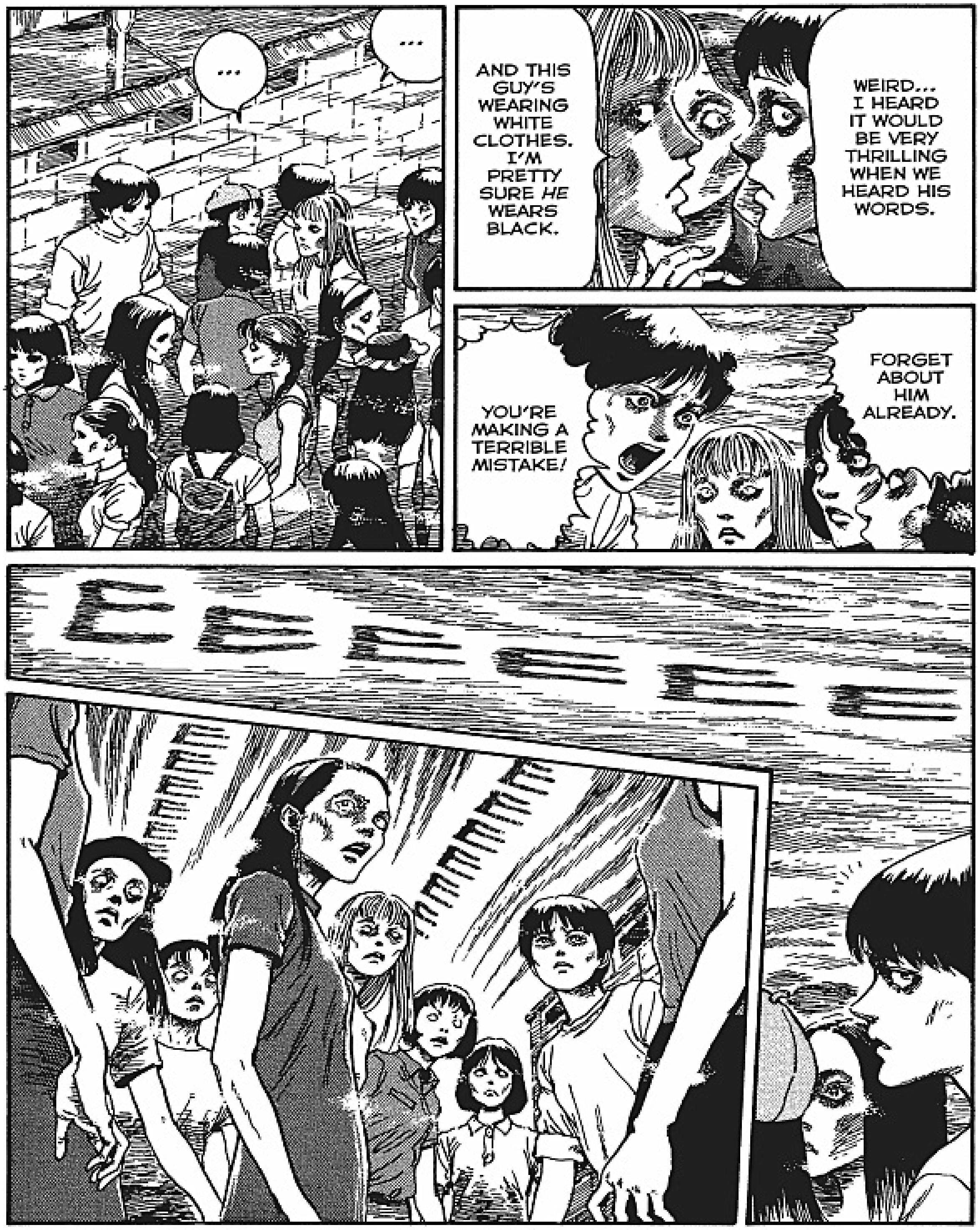

M-MIDORI...
SO I...
...MET THE CROSSROADS BOY THAT DAY.
WHAT?!
HE TOLD ME TO HATE YOU FOREVER.
I COULDN'T STOP SHAKING AFTER HE SAID THAT. IT DIDN'T FEEL LIKE THE WORDS OF A STRANGER FOR SOME REASON.
I GOT THIS FEELING THAT HE AND I HAD SOME KIND OF CONNECTION.
AND THAT HE HATES YOU.
I'VE THOUGHT ABOUT WHO HE COULD BE. AND THERE'S ONE PERSON WHO FITS.
MY COUSIN. THE BABY MY DEAD AUNT WAS CARRYING.
THE BABY WAS ALIVE IN THIS WORLD, BUT KILLED BEFORE HE COULD BE BORN.

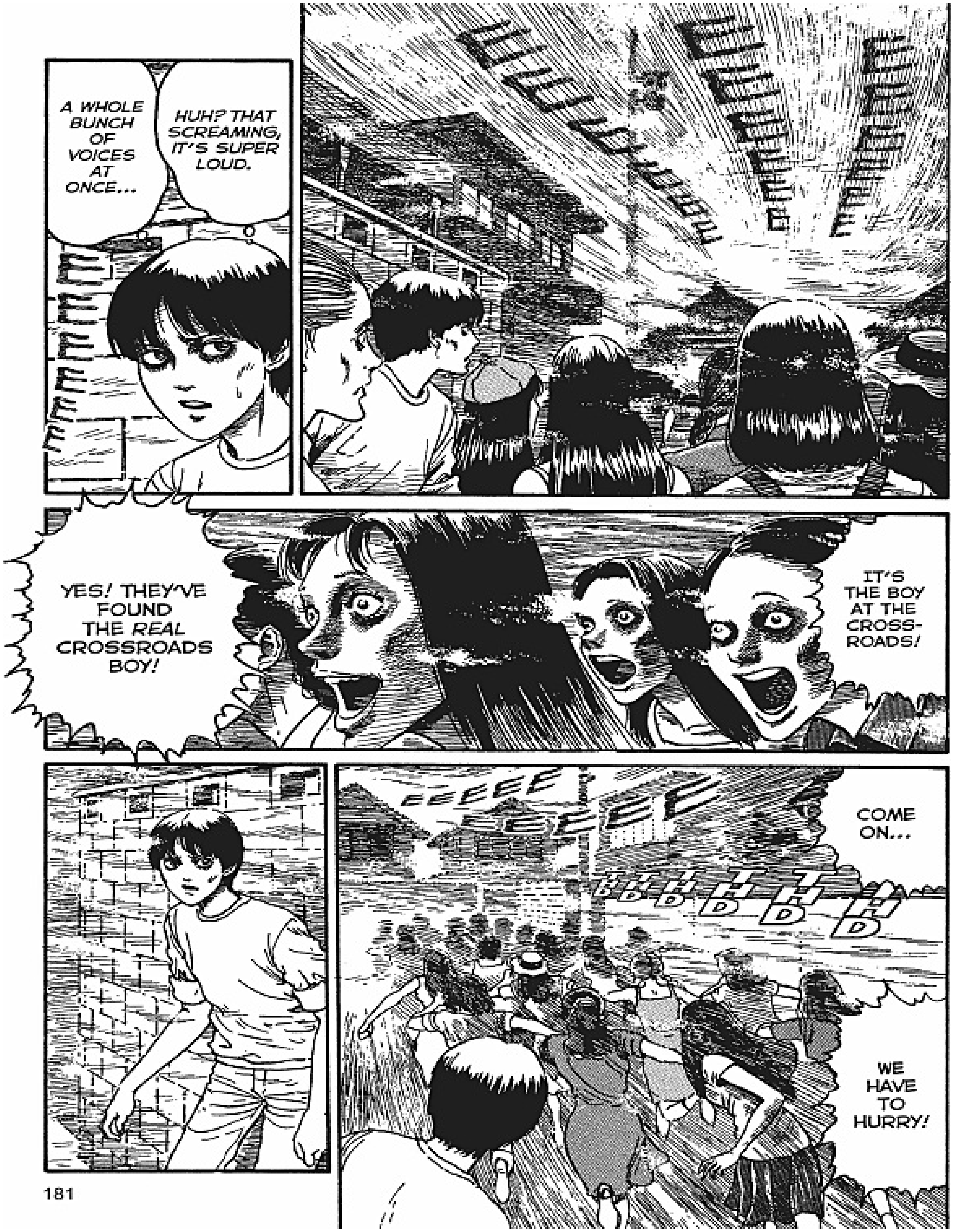

MAYBE HE'S TRYING TO GET REVENGE ON YOU NOW.
WITH THE SAME METHOD YOU USED AS A CHILD.
SO THEN... YOU'RE SAYING THE CROSSROADS BOY...
...IS REALLY YOUR AUNT'S CHILD?
WHAT? DO YOU THINK I'M GOING TO KILL MYSELF BECAUSE I MET HIM?
DON'T BE STUPID. THERE'S NO WAY MY COUSIN WOULD MAKE ME KILL MYSELF.
I HOPE YOU LEARN JUST HOW PAINFUL IT IS FOR PEOPLE TO HATE YOU.
I HOPE YOU SUFFER HORRIBLY.
AH! MIDORI, WAIT!
WHERE ARE YOU GOING?!

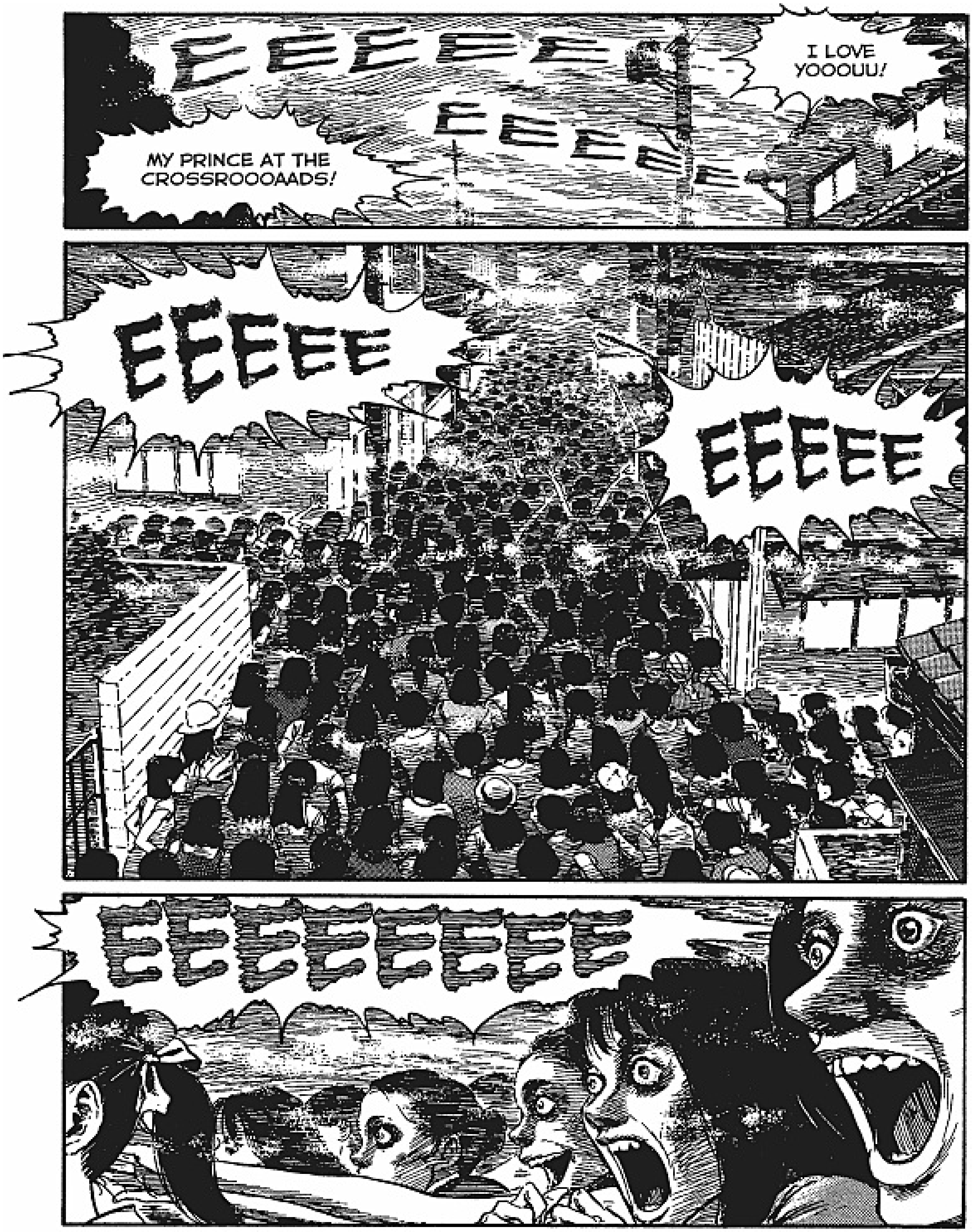

MIDORI !!
THIS IS BAD. I'M ACTUALLY WORRIED.
MIDORI!
DAMMIT... THE FOG'S SO THICK!
STILL ...
...IS THE BOY REALLY HER AUNT'S CHILD?
HAAH, HAAH.

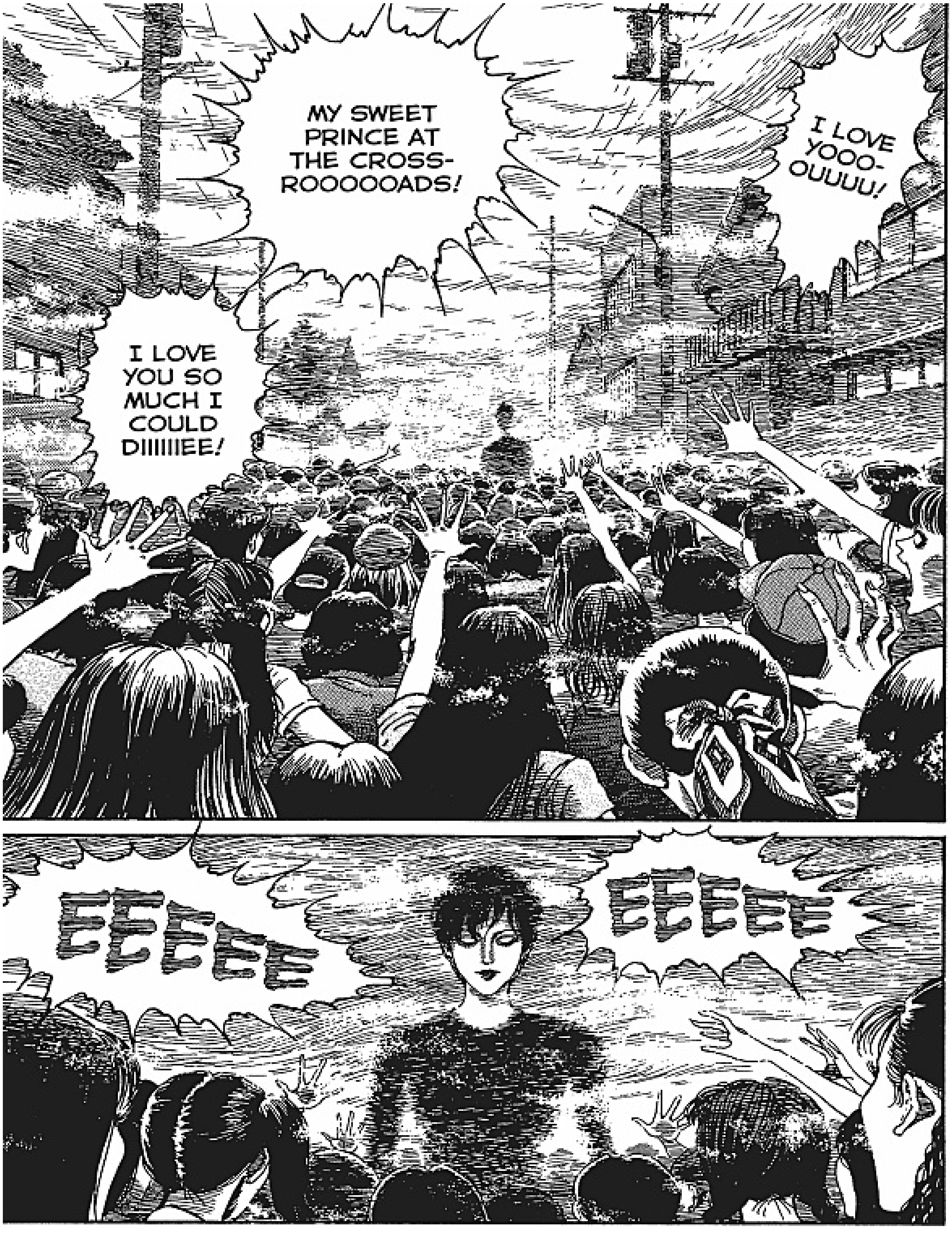

HAAH, HAAH.
EXCUSE ME. HAVE YOU SEEN A JUNIOR HIGH GIRL AROUND HERE?
IT'S HIM!
AH!
OH NO!
AAH!

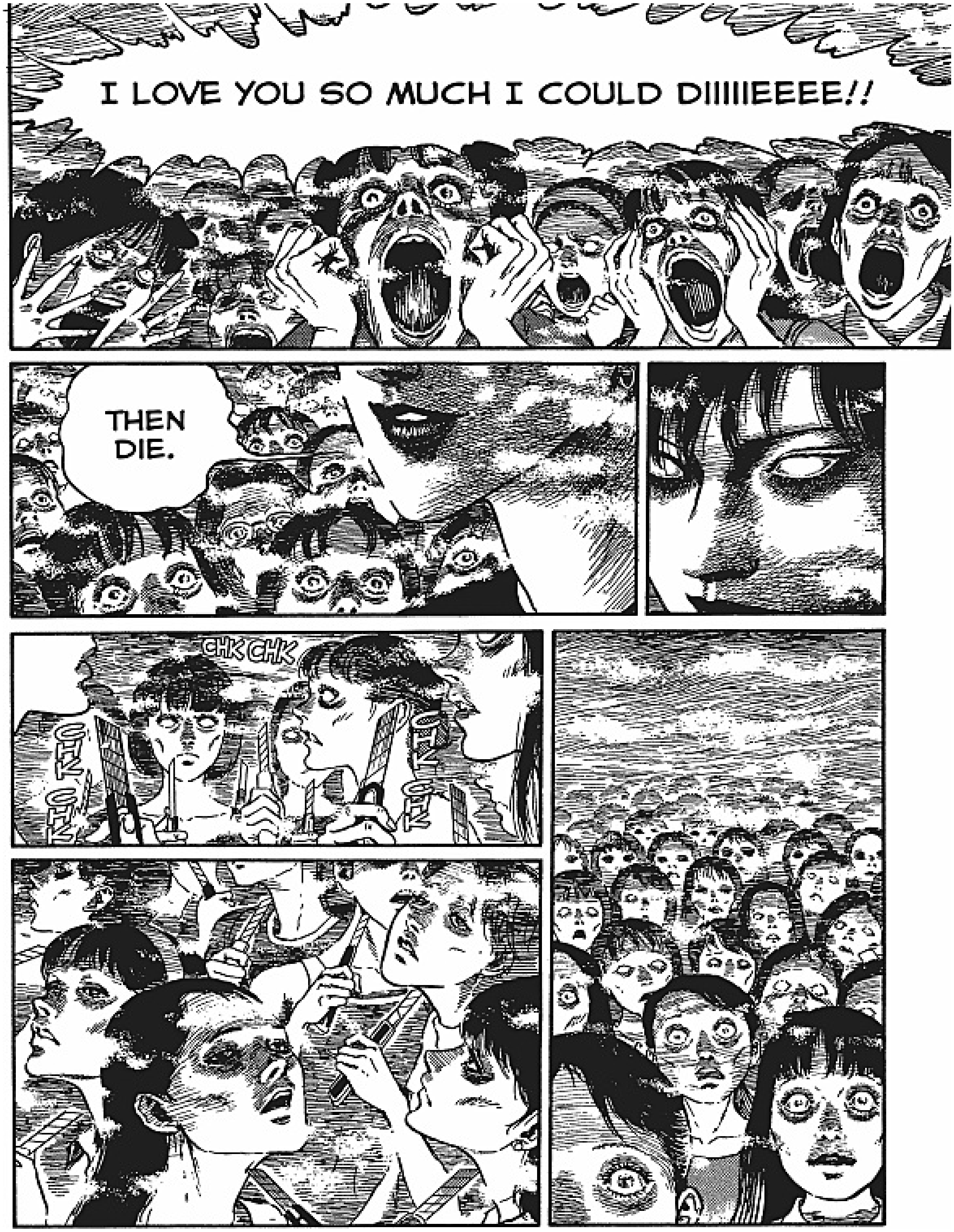

I LOVE YOU!
I LOVE YOU SO MUCH I COULD DIE!
I WANTED TO SEE YOU!
MY PRINCE AT THE CROSSROADS... PLEASE *SPEAK* TO ME.
ME TOO.
ME TOO.
ALL OF YOU... COME BACK TO YOUR SENSES.
LOOK IN A MIRROR. YOU'RE SKIN AND BONES... IF THIS KEEPS UP, YOU'LL DIE.
...
WHISPER
WHISPER
WHISPER
WHISPER

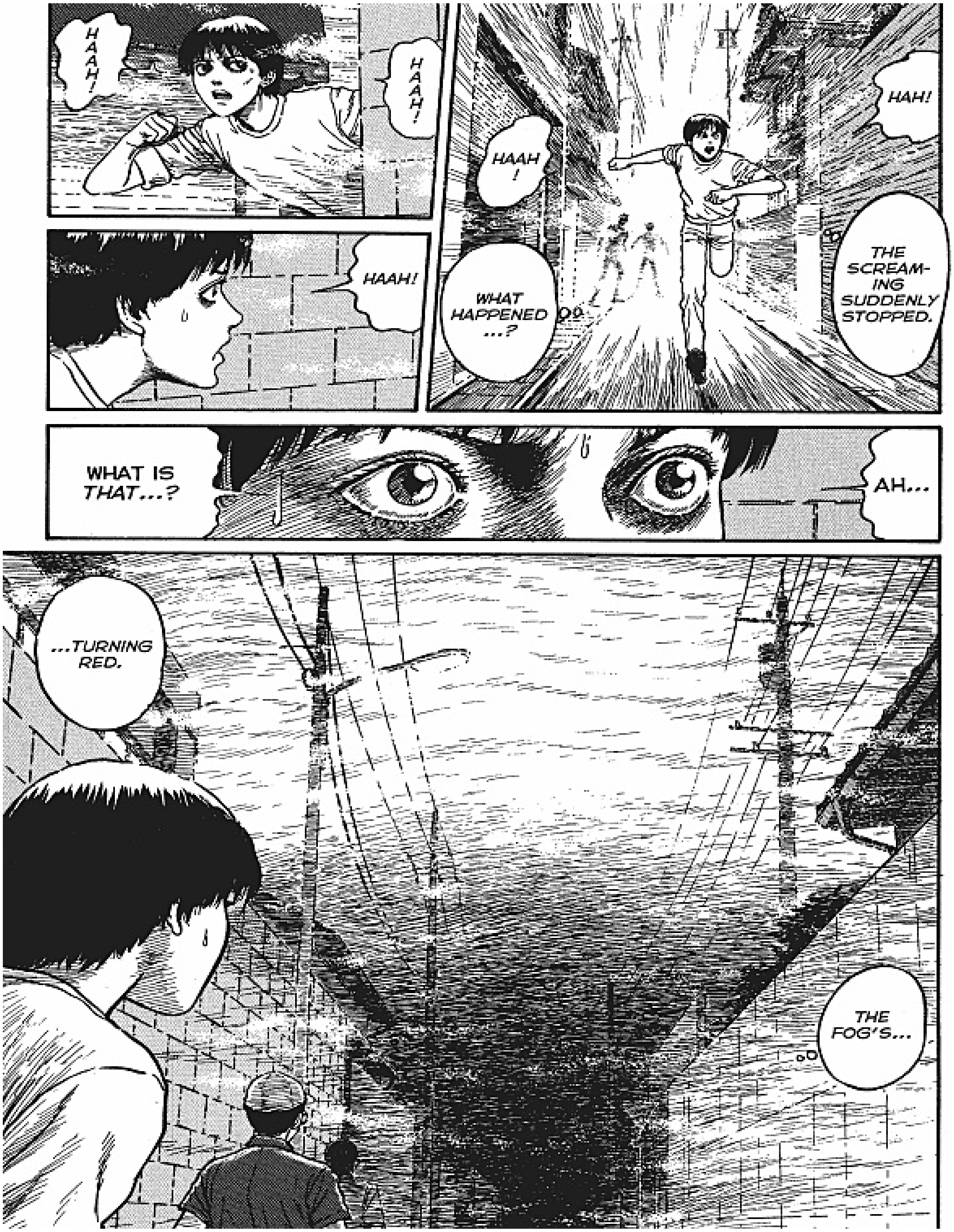

WEIRD... I HEARD IT WOULD BE VERY THRILLING WHEN WE HEARD HIS WORDS.
AND THIS GUY'S WEARING WHITE CLOTHES. I'M PRETTY SURE *HE* WEARS BLACK.
...
...
FORGET ABOUT HIM ALREADY.
YOU'RE MAKING A TERRIBLE MISTAKE!
EEEEEE

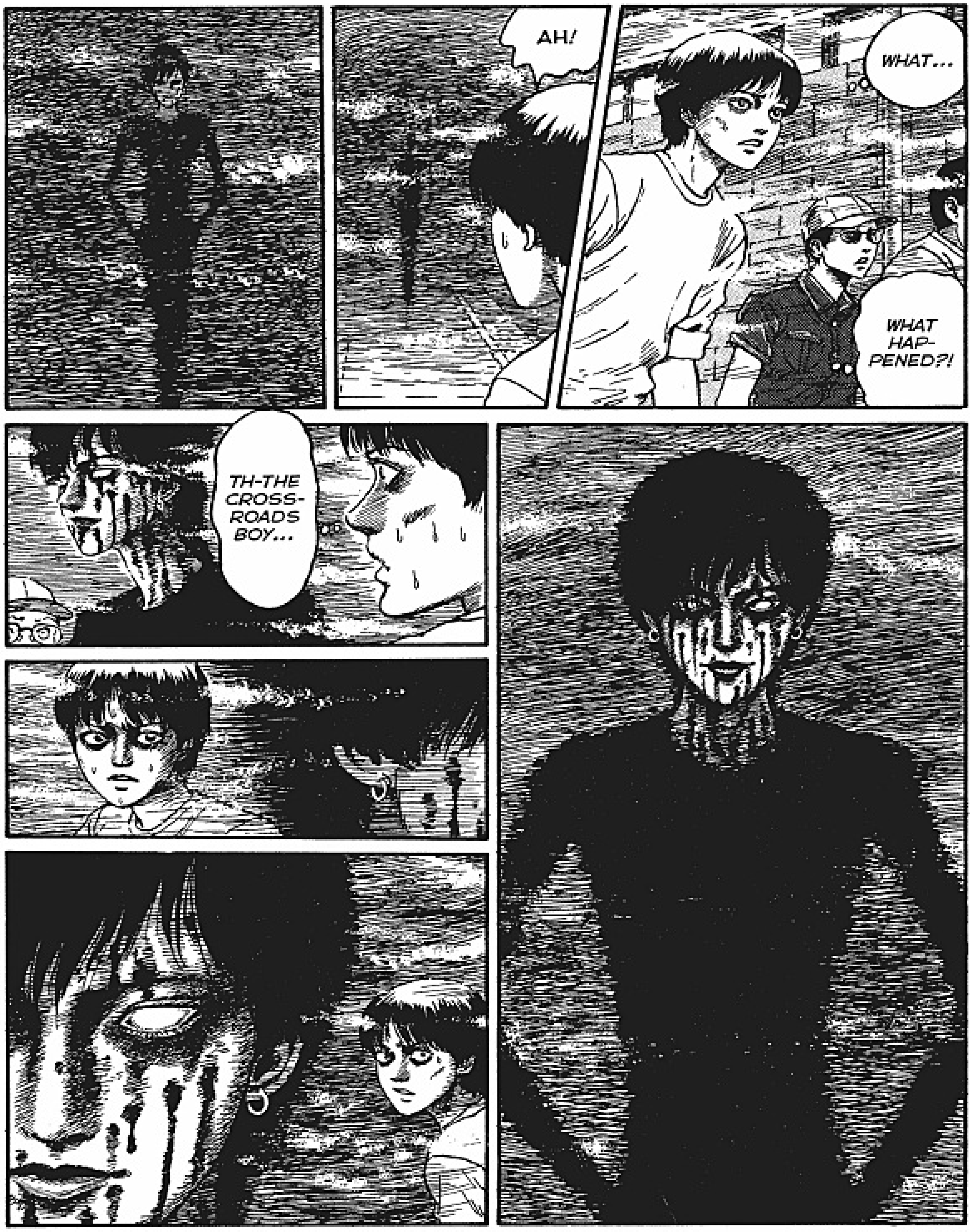

EEEEEEE
HUH? THAT SCREAMING, IT'S SUPER LOUD.
A WHOLE BUNCH OF VOICES AT ONCE...
EEEEEEEE
IT'S THE BOY AT THE CROSSROADS!
YES! THEY'VE FOUND THE *REAL* CROSSROADS BOY!
COME ON...
EEEE
EEEE
THUD THUD THUD THUD THUD
WE HAVE TO HURRY!

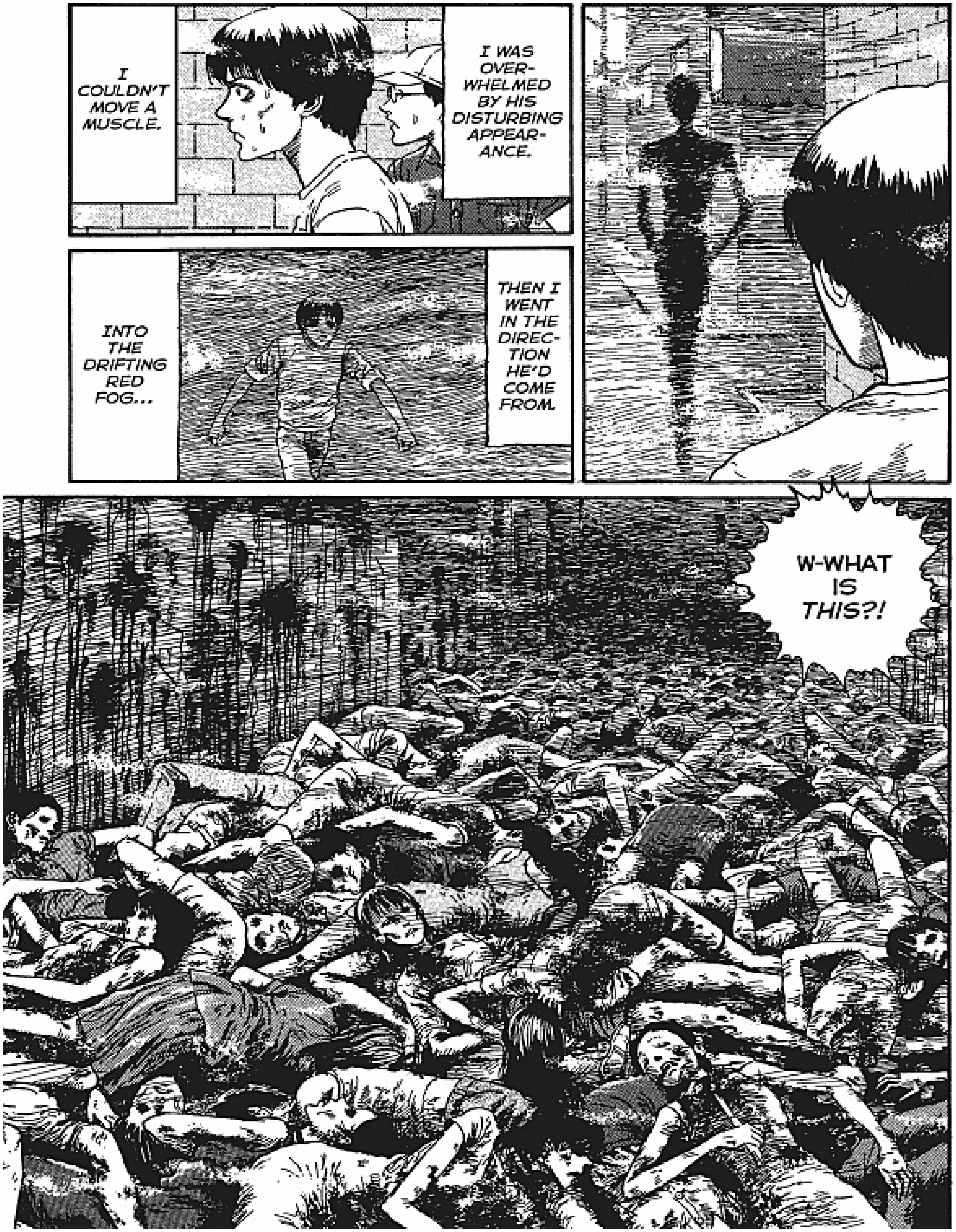

I LOVE YOOOUU!
EEEEEE
EEEEEE
MY PRINCE AT THE CROSSROOOOAADS!
EEEEE
EEEEE
EEEEEEEEE

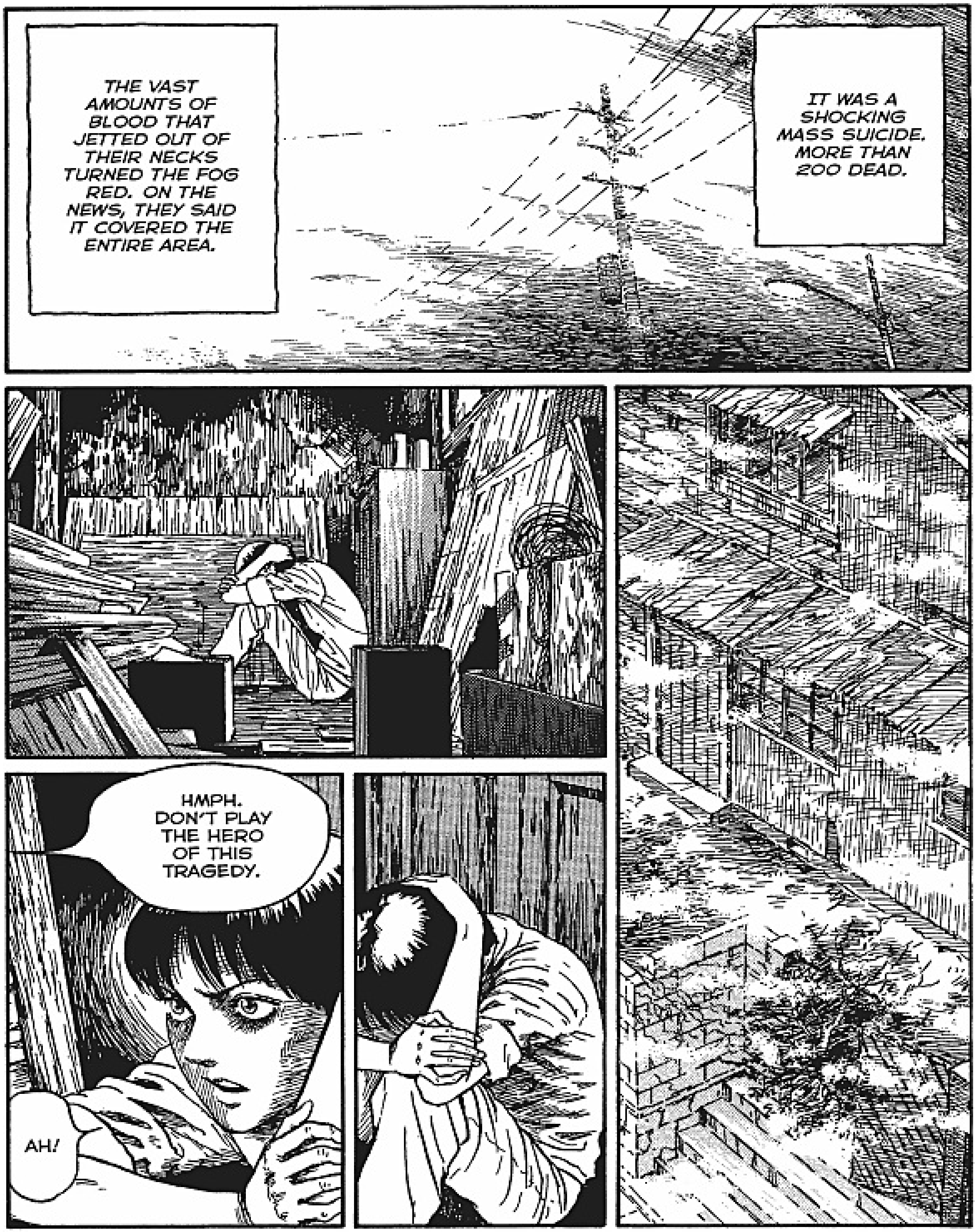

I LOVE YOOO-OUUUU!
MY SWEET PRINCE AT THE CROSS-ROOOOOADS!
I LOVE YOU SO MUCH I COULD DIIIIIEE!
EEEEE
EEEEE

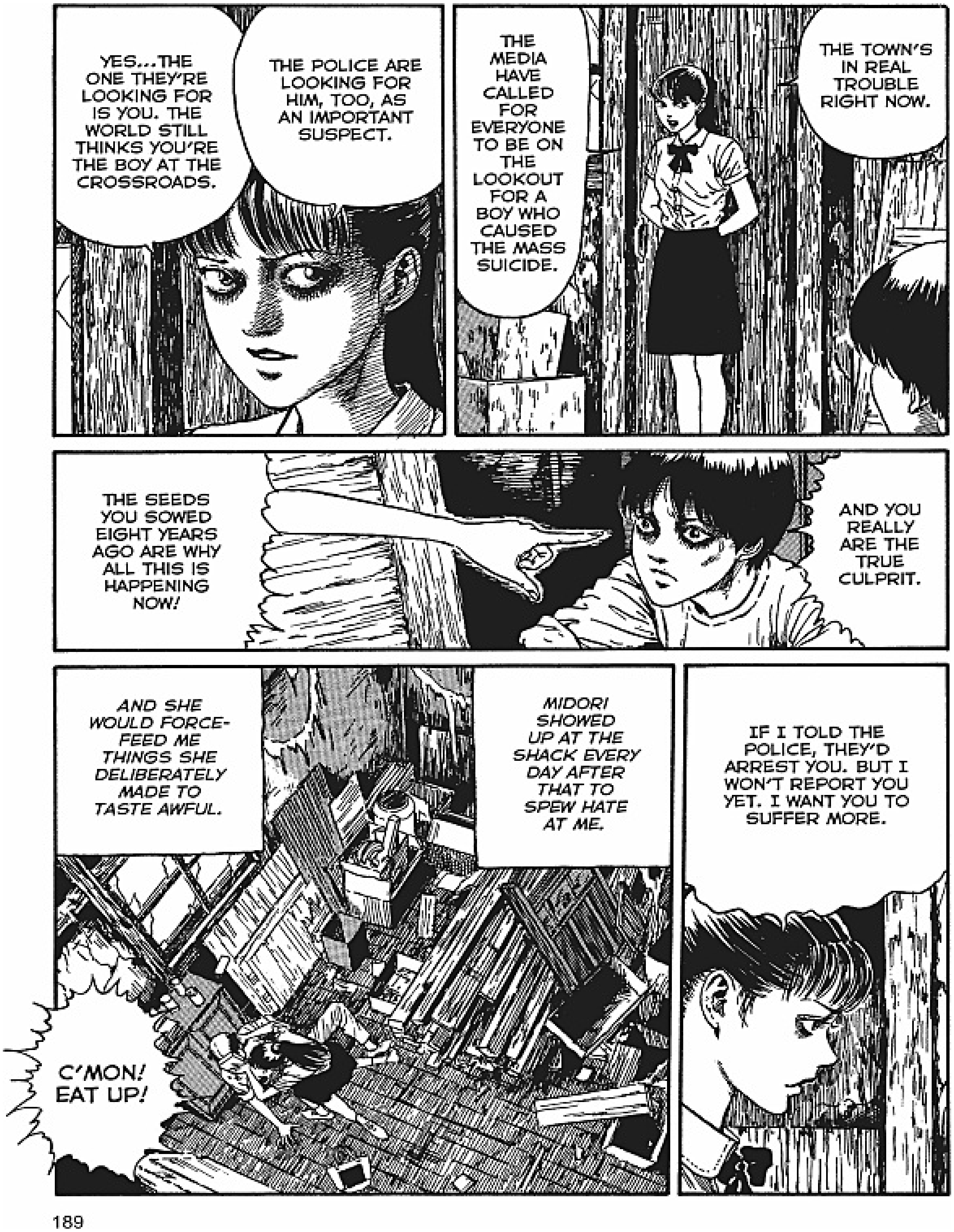

I LOVE YOU SO MUCH I COULD DIIIIIEEEE!!
THEN DIE.
CHK CHK
CHK CHK
CHK CHK

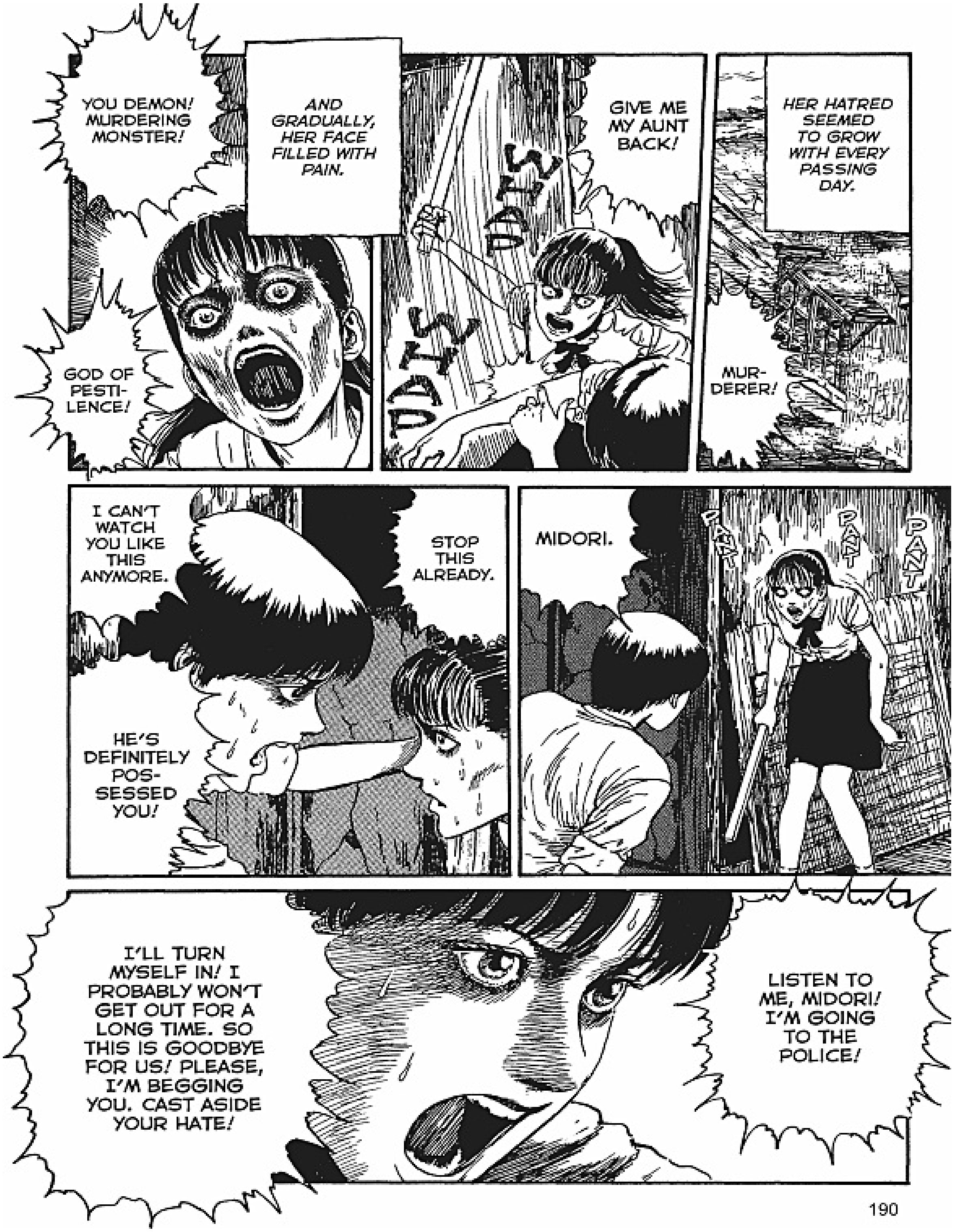

HAH!
THE SCREAMING SUDDENLY STOPPED.
HAAH!
WHAT HAPPENED...?
HAAH!
HAAH!
HAAH!
AH...
WHAT IS THAT...?
THE FOG'S...
...TURNING RED.

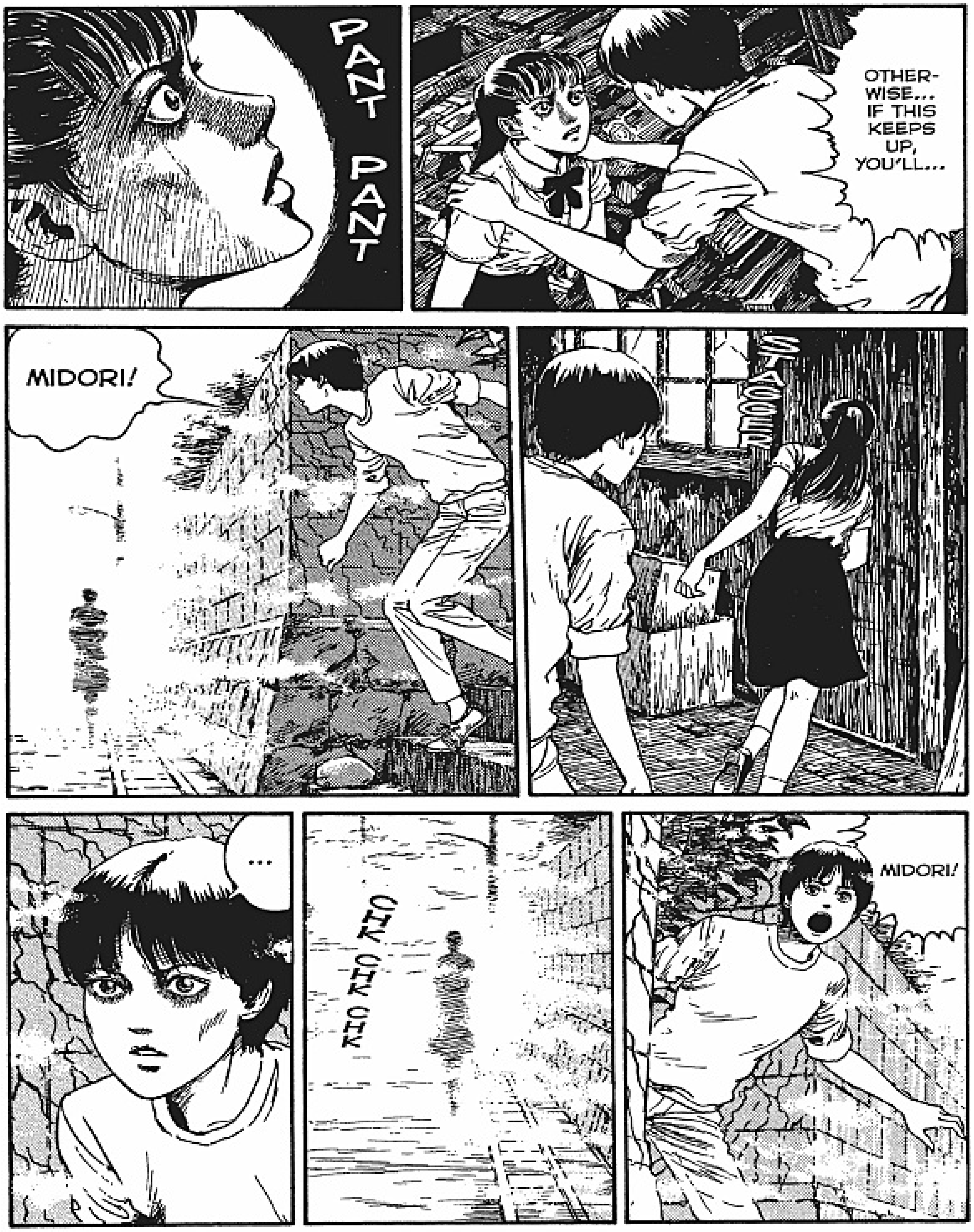

WHAT…
AH!
WHAT HAP-PENED?!
TH-THE CROSS-ROADS BOY…

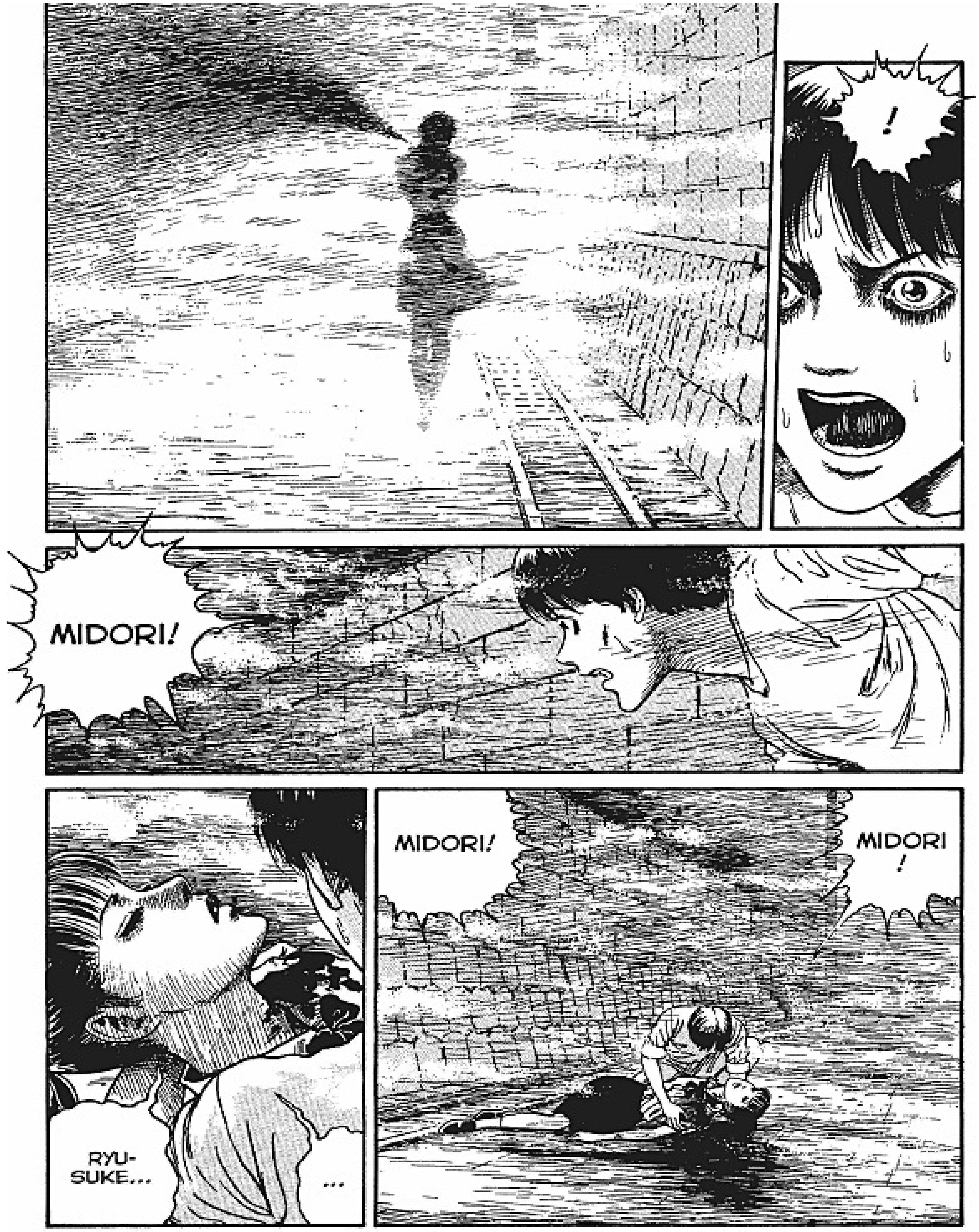

I COULDN'T MOVE A MUSCLE.
I WAS OVERWHELMED BY HIS DISTURBING APPEARANCE.
THEN I WENT IN THE DIRECTION HE'D COME FROM.
INTO THE DRIFTING RED FOG...
W-WHAT IS *THIS?!*

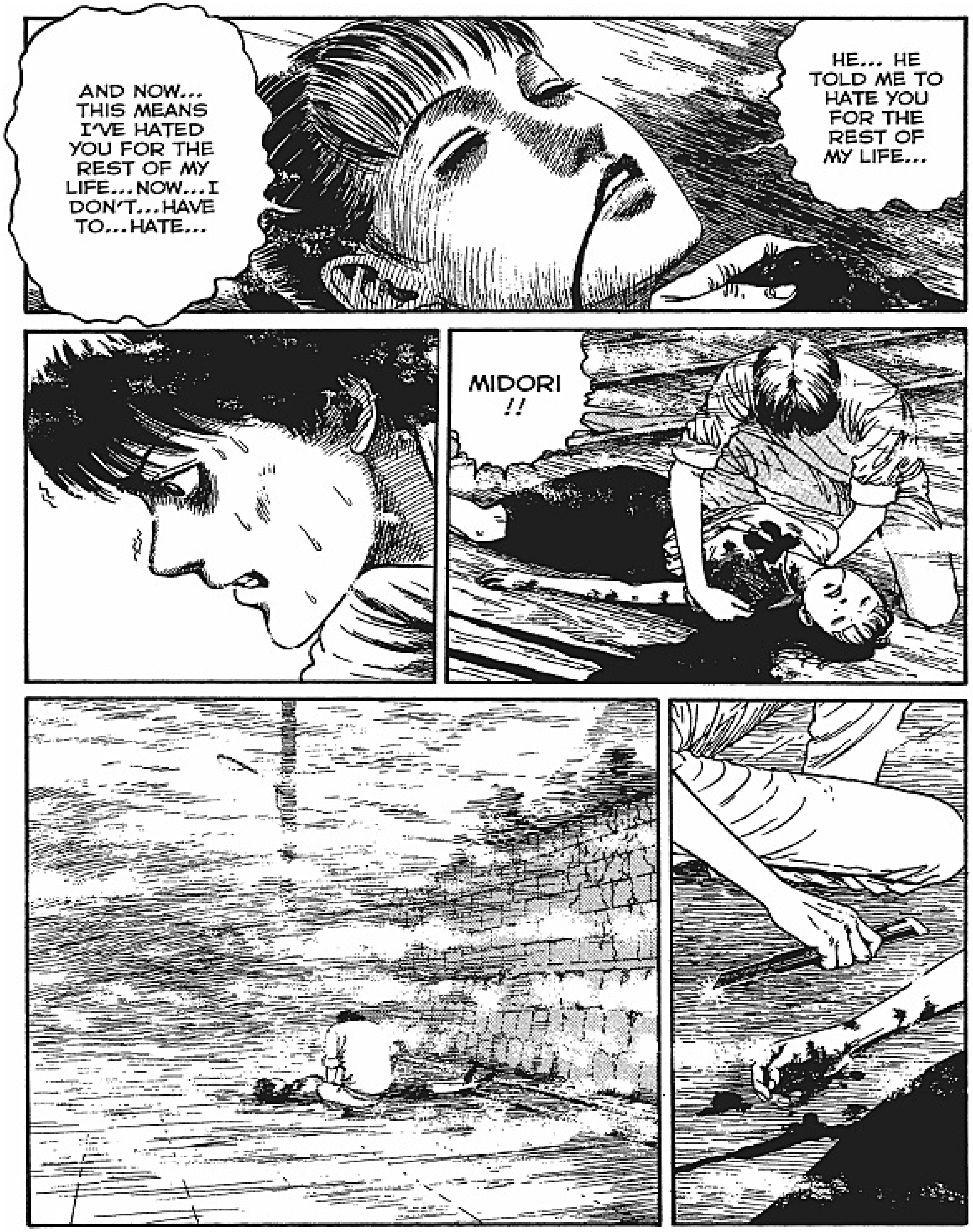

THE VAST AMOUNTS OF BLOOD THAT JETTED OUT OF THEIR NECKS TURNED THE FOG RED. ON THE NEWS, THEY SAID IT COVERED THE ENTIRE AREA.
IT WAS A SHOCKING MASS SUICIDE. MORE THAN 200 DEAD.
HMPH. DON'T PLAY THE HERO OF THIS TRAGEDY.
AH!

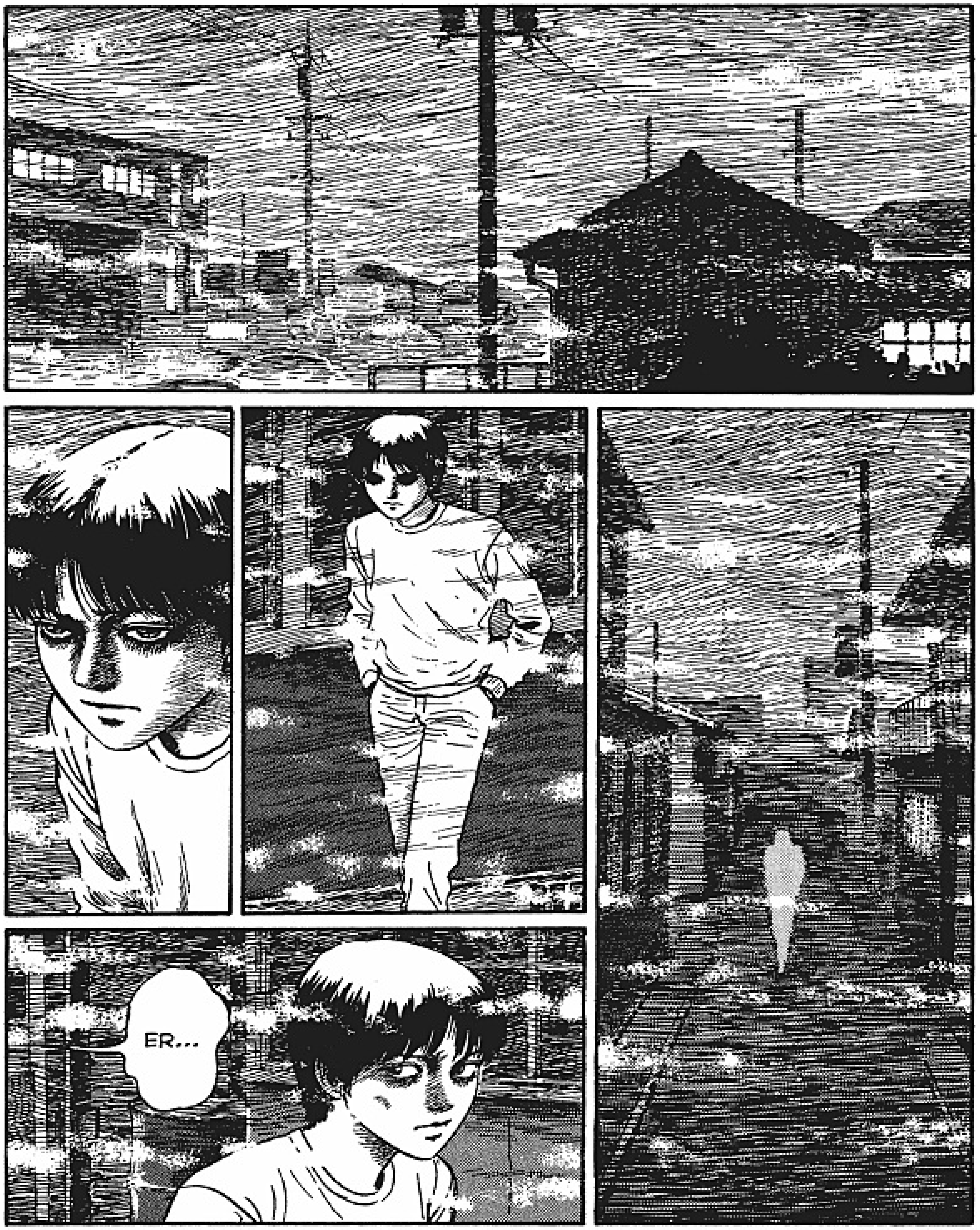

THE TOWN'S IN REAL TROUBLE RIGHT NOW.
THE MEDIA HAVE CALLED FOR EVERYONE TO BE ON THE LOOKOUT FOR A BOY WHO CAUSED THE MASS SUICIDE.
THE POLICE ARE LOOKING FOR HIM, TOO, AS AN IMPORTANT SUSPECT.
YES...THE ONE THEY'RE LOOKING FOR IS YOU. THE WORLD STILL THINKS YOU'RE THE BOY AT THE CROSSROADS.
AND YOU REALLY ARE THE TRUE CULPRIT.
THE SEEDS YOU SOWED EIGHT YEARS AGO ARE WHY ALL THIS IS HAPPENING NOW!
IF I TOLD THE POLICE, THEY'D ARREST YOU. BUT I WON'T REPORT YOU YET. I WANT YOU TO SUFFER MORE.
MIDORI SHOWED UP AT THE SHACK EVERY DAY AFTER THAT TO SPEW HATE AT ME.
AND SHE WOULD FORCE-FEED ME THINGS SHE DELIBERATELY MADE TO TASTE AWFUL.
C'MON! EAT UP!

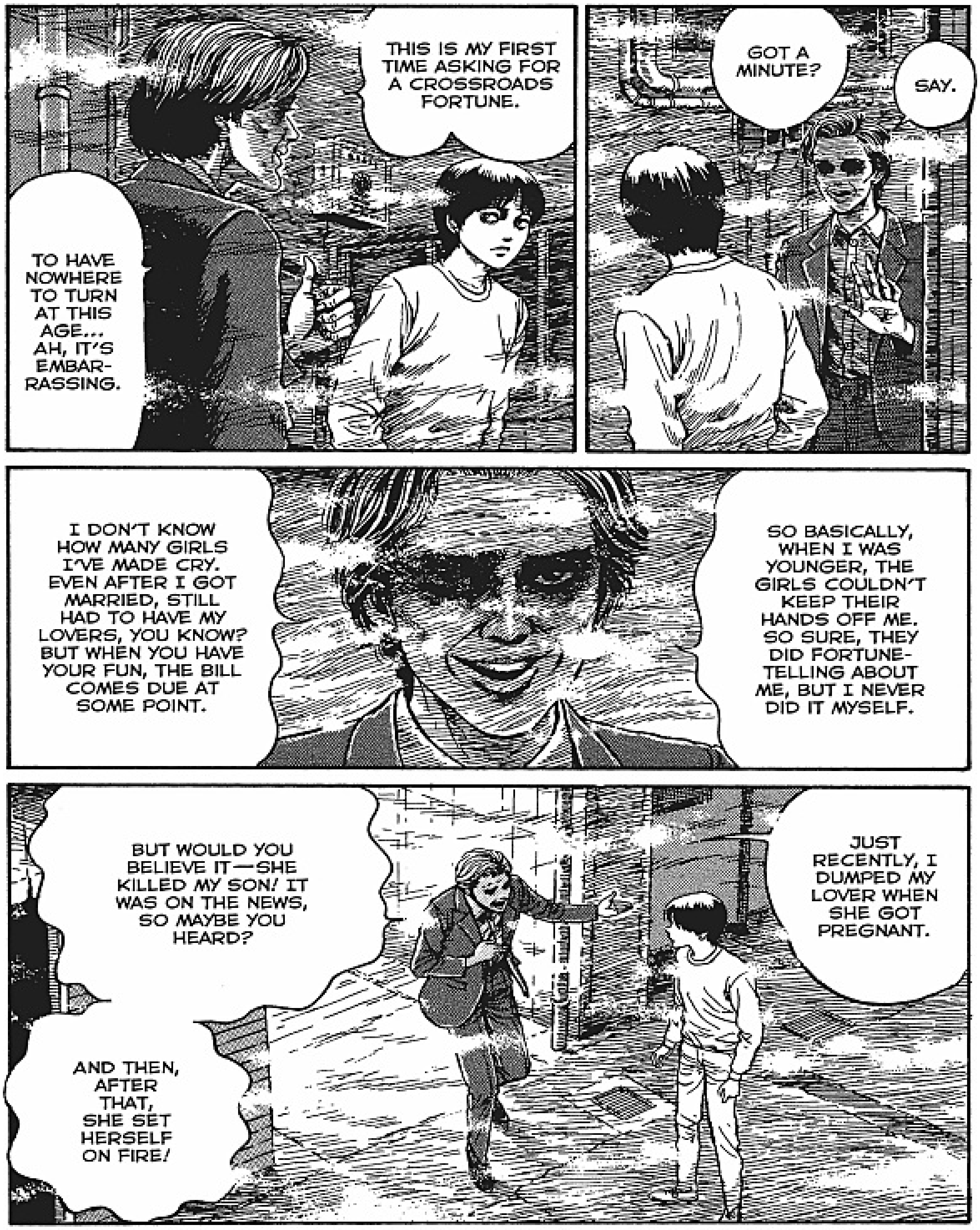

HER HATRED SEEMED TO GROW WITH EVERY PASSING DAY.
MURDERER!
GIVE ME MY AUNT BACK!
WHAP
WHAP
AND GRADUALLY, HER FACE FILLED WITH PAIN.
YOU DEMON! MURDERING MONSTER!
GOD OF PESTILENCE!
PANT
PANT
PANT
MIDORI.
STOP THIS ALREADY.
I CAN'T WATCH YOU LIKE THIS ANYMORE.
HE'S DEFINITELY POSSESSED YOU!
LISTEN TO ME, MIDORI! I'M GOING TO THE POLICE!
I'LL TURN MYSELF IN! I PROBABLY WON'T GET OUT FOR A LONG TIME. SO THIS IS GOODBYE FOR US! PLEASE, I'M BEGGING YOU. CAST ASIDE YOUR HATE!

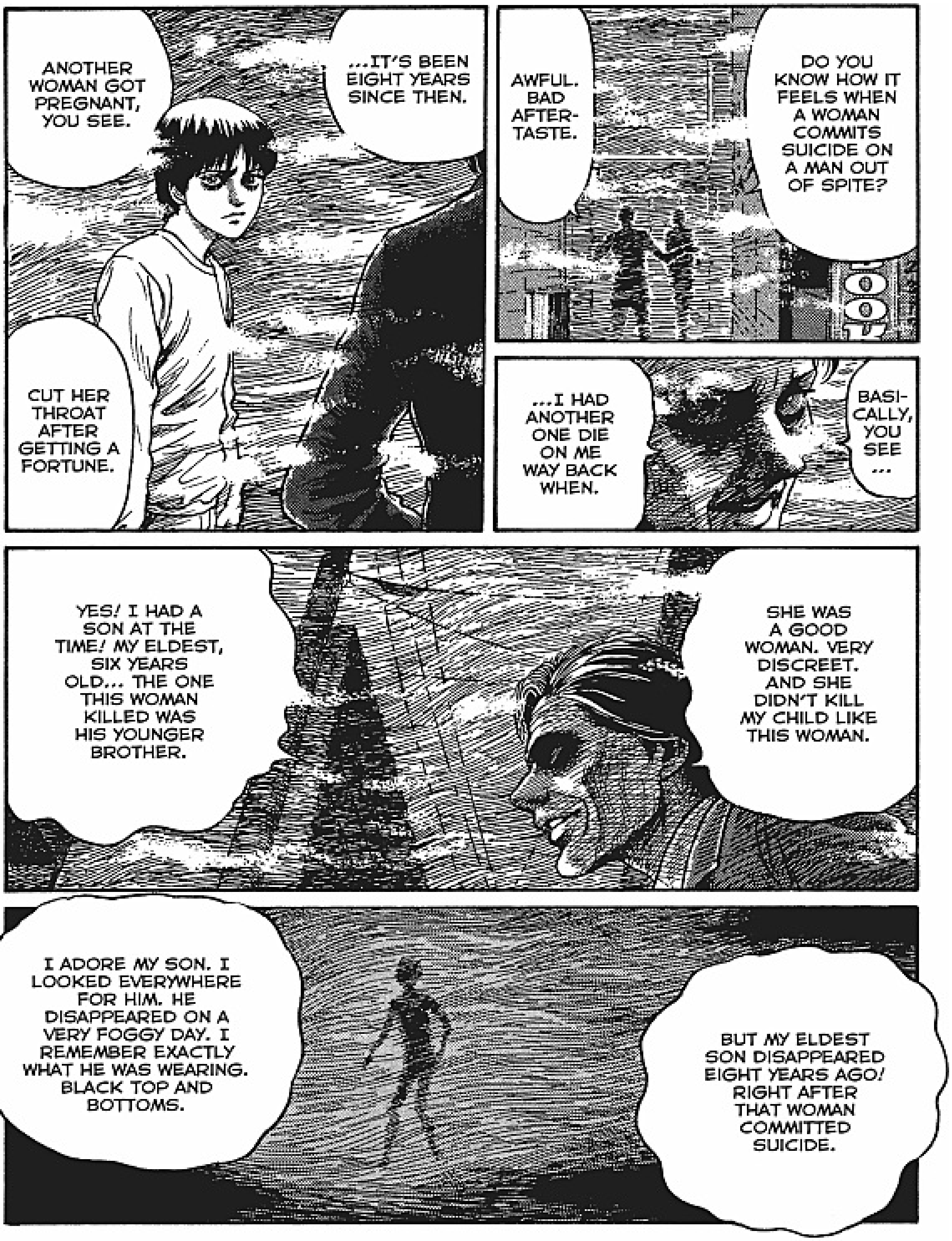

OTHER-WISE... IF THIS KEEPS UP, YOU'LL...
PANT PANT
MIDORI!
...
CHK CHK CHK
MIDORI!

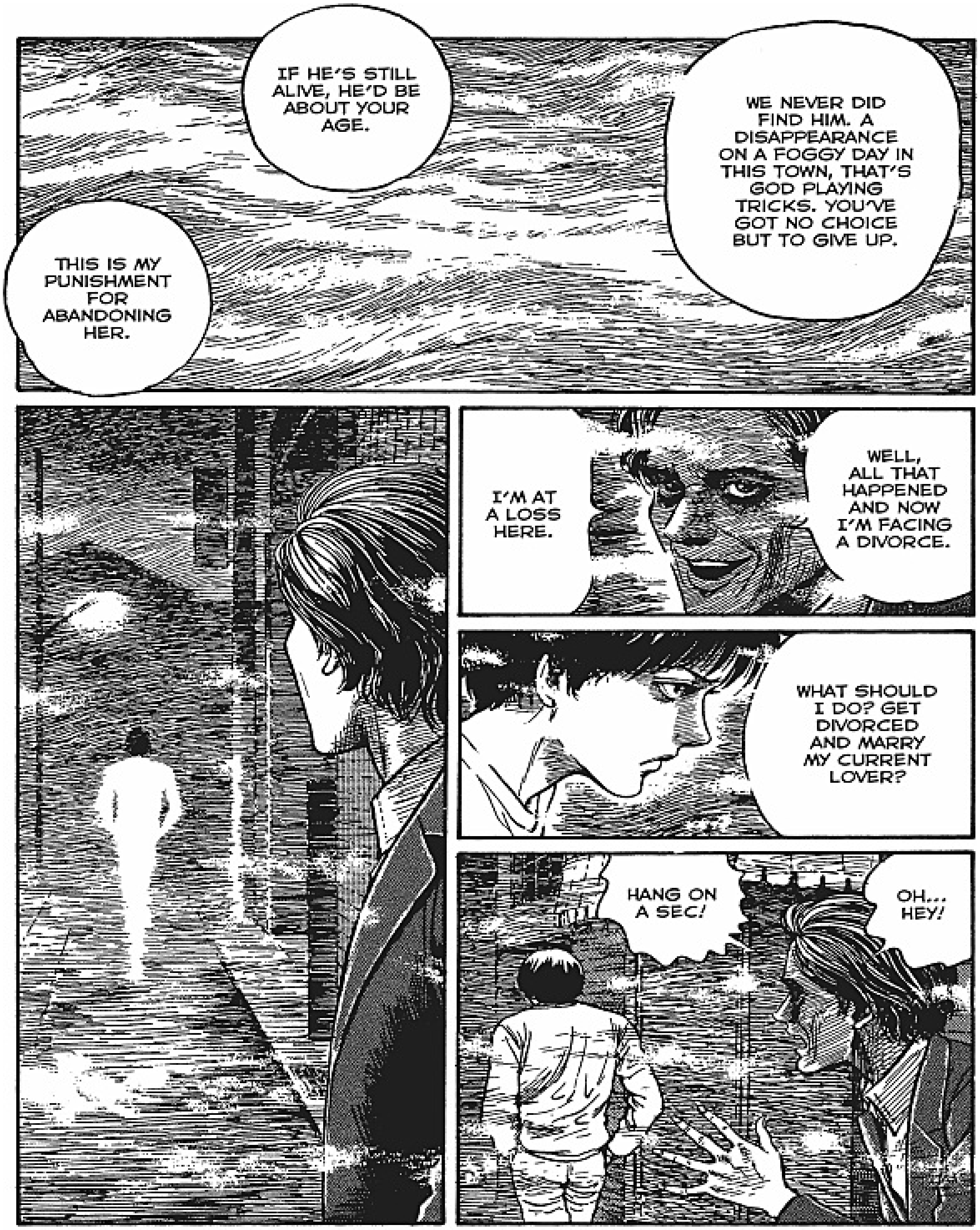

!
MIDORI!
MIDORI !
MIDORI!
...
RYU-SUKE...

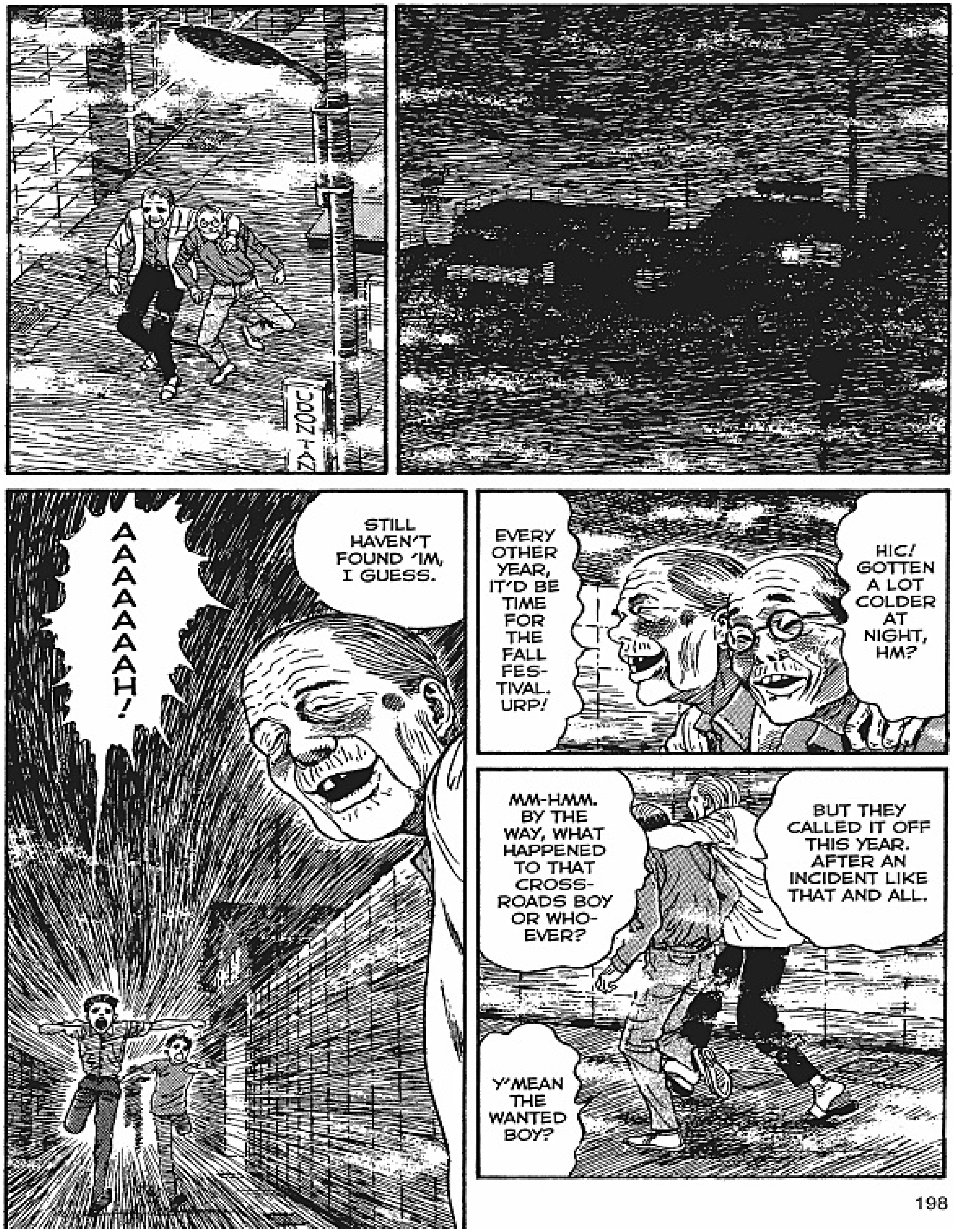

HE... HE TOLD ME TO HATE YOU FOR THE REST OF MY LIFE...
AND NOW... THIS MEANS I'VE HATED YOU FOR THE REST OF MY LIFE...NOW...I DON'T...HAVE TO...HATE...
MIDORI !!

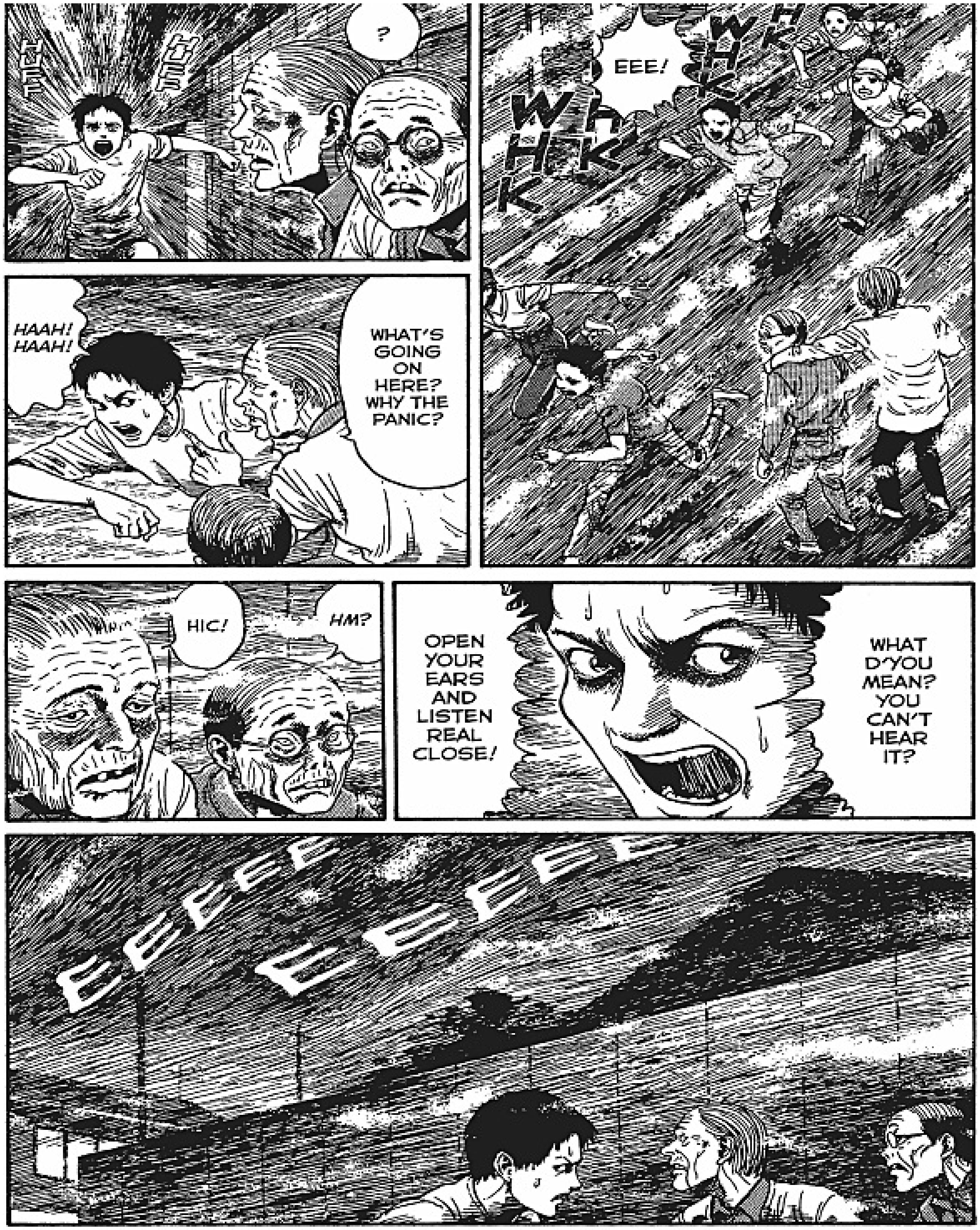

ER...

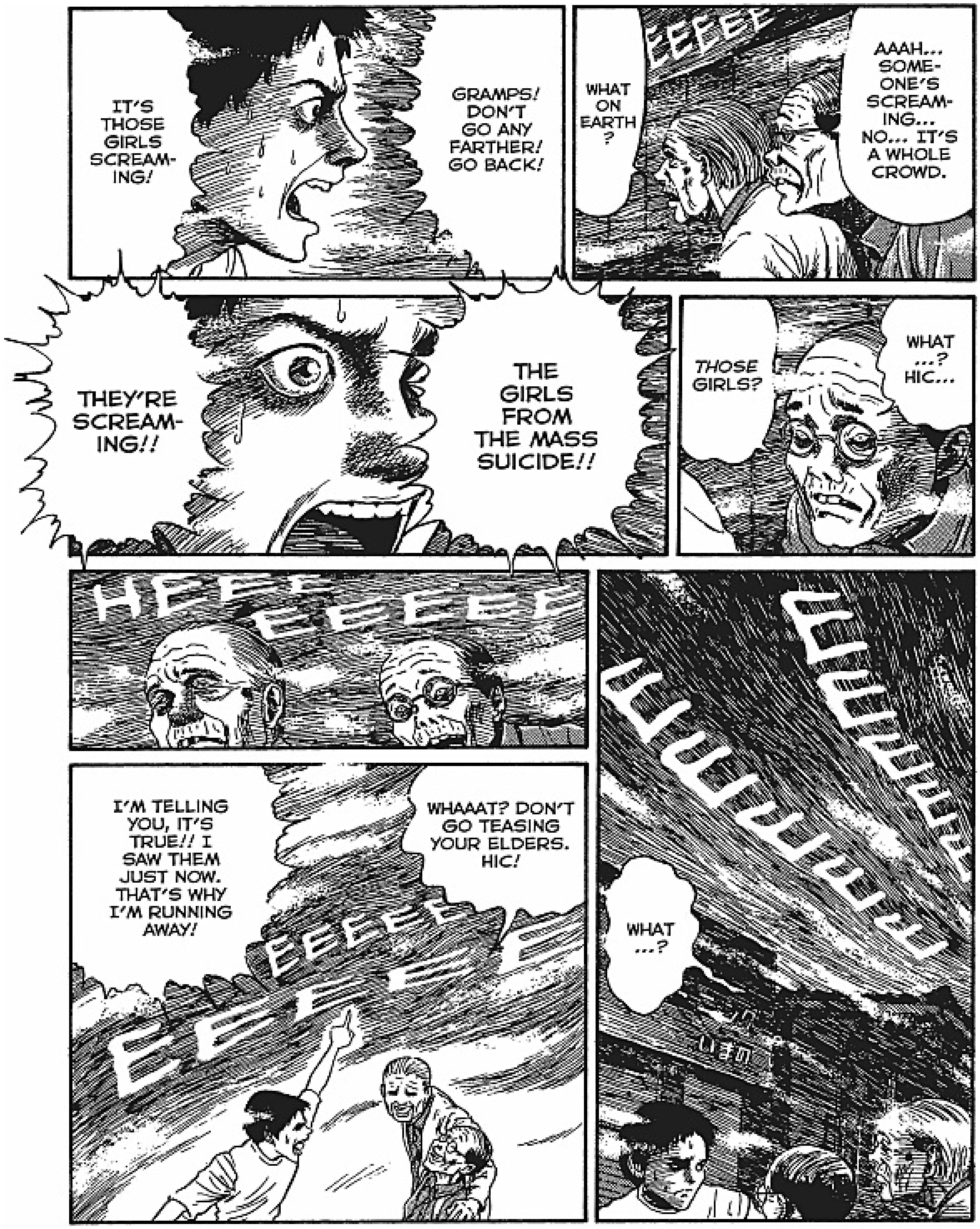

SAY.
GOT A MINUTE?
THIS IS MY FIRST TIME ASKING FOR A CROSSROADS FORTUNE.
TO HAVE NOWHERE TO TURN AT THIS AGE... AH, IT'S EMBARRASSING.
SO BASICALLY, WHEN I WAS YOUNGER, THE GIRLS COULDN'T KEEP THEIR HANDS OFF ME. SO SURE, THEY DID FORTUNE-TELLING ABOUT ME, BUT I NEVER DID IT MYSELF.
I DON'T KNOW HOW MANY GIRLS I'VE MADE CRY. EVEN AFTER I GOT MARRIED, STILL HAD TO HAVE MY LOVERS, YOU KNOW? BUT WHEN YOU HAVE YOUR FUN, THE BILL COMES DUE AT SOME POINT.
JUST RECENTLY, I DUMPED MY LOVER WHEN SHE GOT PREGNANT.
BUT WOULD YOU BELIEVE IT—SHE KILLED MY SON! IT WAS ON THE NEWS, SO MAYBE YOU HEARD?
AND THEN, AFTER THAT, SHE SET HERSELF ON FIRE!

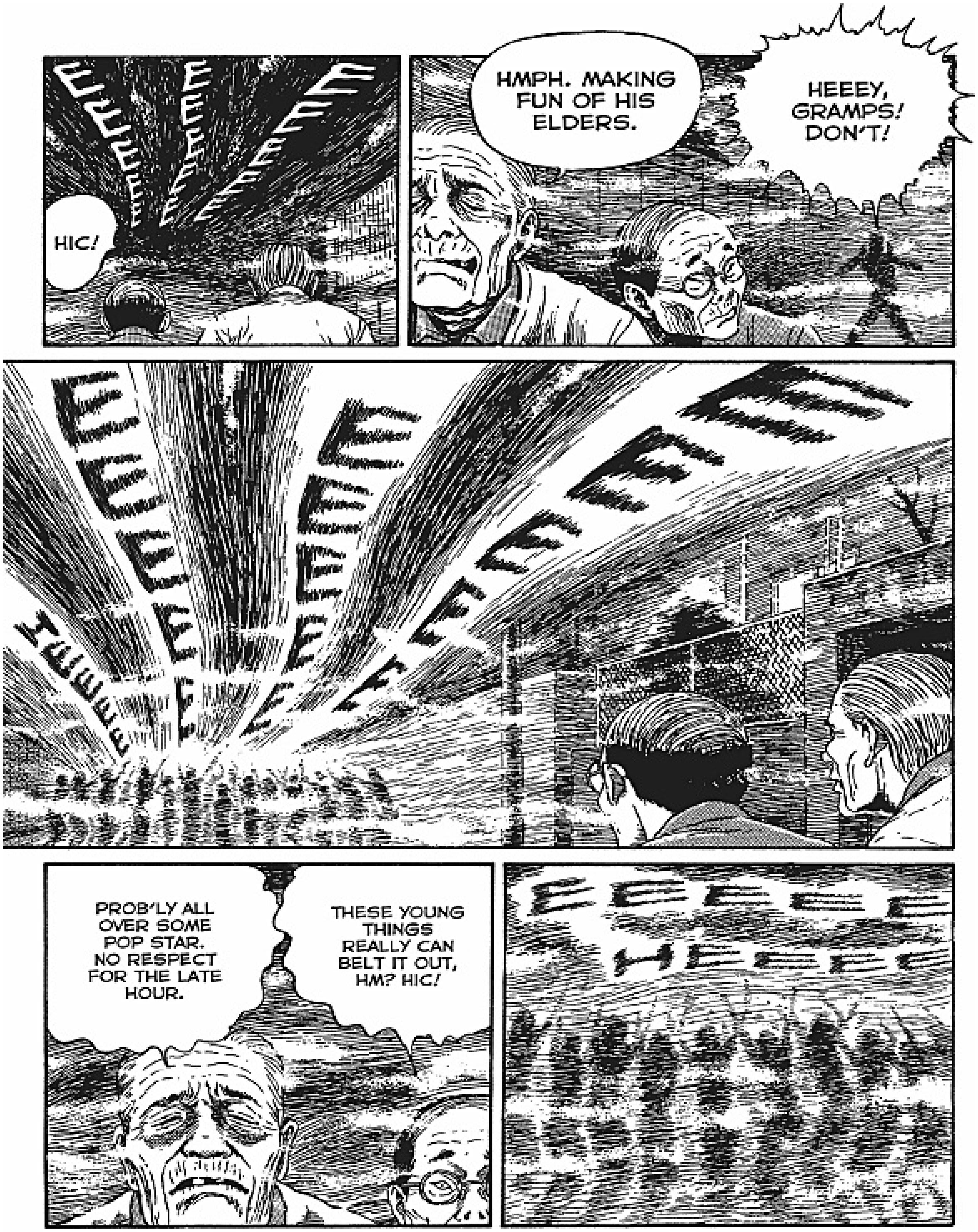

DO YOU KNOW HOW IT FEELS WHEN A WOMAN COMMITS SUICIDE ON A MAN OUT OF SPITE?
AWFUL. BAD AFTERTASTE.
BASICALLY, YOU SEE ...
...I HAD ANOTHER ONE DIE ON ME WAY BACK WHEN.
...IT'S BEEN EIGHT YEARS SINCE THEN.
ANOTHER WOMAN GOT PREGNANT, YOU SEE.
CUT HER THROAT AFTER GETTING A FORTUNE.
SHE WAS A GOOD WOMAN. VERY DISCREET. AND SHE DIDN'T KILL MY CHILD LIKE THIS WOMAN.
YES! I HAD A SON AT THE TIME! MY ELDEST, SIX YEARS OLD... THE ONE THIS WOMAN KILLED WAS HIS YOUNGER BROTHER.
BUT MY ELDEST SON DISAPPEARED EIGHT YEARS AGO! RIGHT AFTER THAT WOMAN COMMITTED SUICIDE.
I ADORE MY SON. I LOOKED EVERYWHERE FOR HIM. HE DISAPPEARED ON A VERY FOGGY DAY. I REMEMBER EXACTLY WHAT HE WAS WEARING. BLACK TOP AND BOTTOMS.

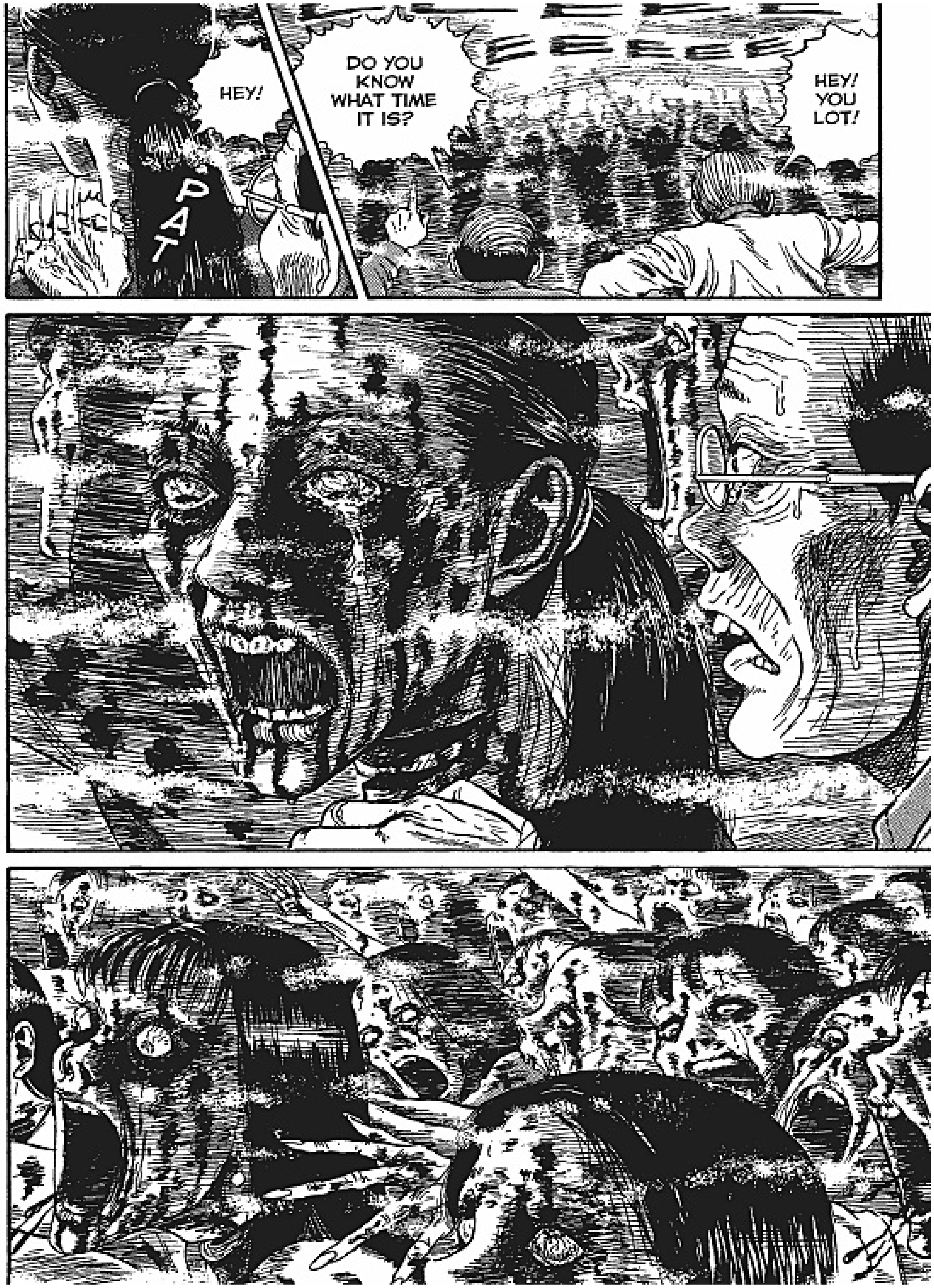

WE NEVER DID FIND HIM. A DISAPPEARANCE ON A FOGGY DAY IN THIS TOWN, THAT'S GOD PLAYING TRICKS. YOU'VE GOT NO CHOICE BUT TO GIVE UP.
IF HE'S STILL ALIVE, HE'D BE ABOUT YOUR AGE.
THIS IS MY PUNISHMENT FOR ABANDONING HER.
WELL, ALL THAT HAPPENED AND NOW I'M FACING A DIVORCE.
I'M AT A LOSS HERE.
WHAT SHOULD I DO? GET DIVORCED AND MARRY MY CURRENT LOVER?
OH... HEY!
HANG ON A SEC!

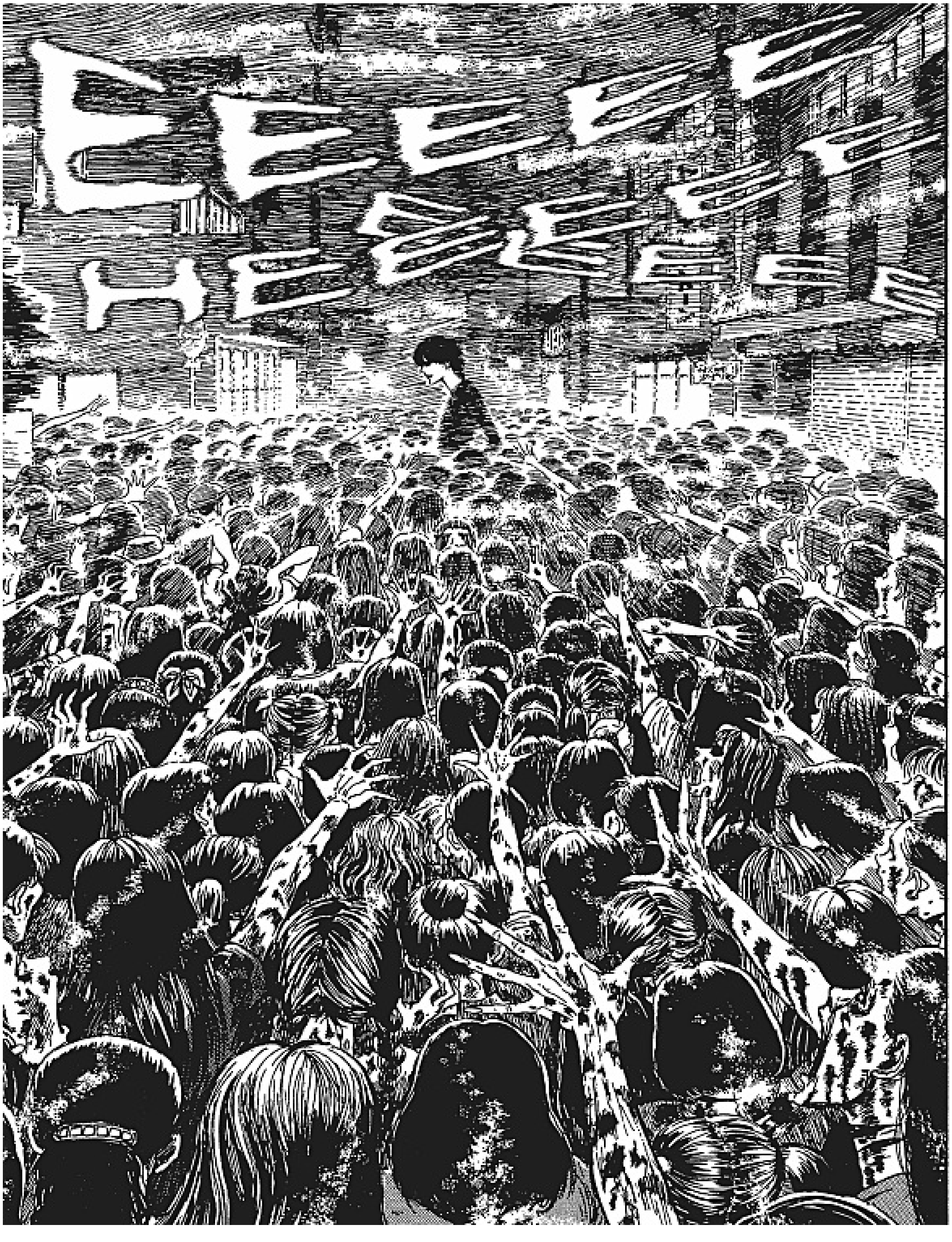

UDONTAN
HIC! GOTTEN A LOT COLDER AT NIGHT, HM?
EVERY OTHER YEAR, IT'D BE TIME FOR THE FALL FESTIVAL. URP!
BUT THEY CALLED IT OFF THIS YEAR. AFTER AN INCIDENT LIKE THAT AND ALL.
MM-HMM. BY THE WAY, WHAT HAPPENED TO THAT CROSSROADS BOY OR WHOEVER?
Y'MEAN THE WANTED BOY?
STILL HAVEN'T FOUND 'IM, I GUESS.
AAAAAAAAH!

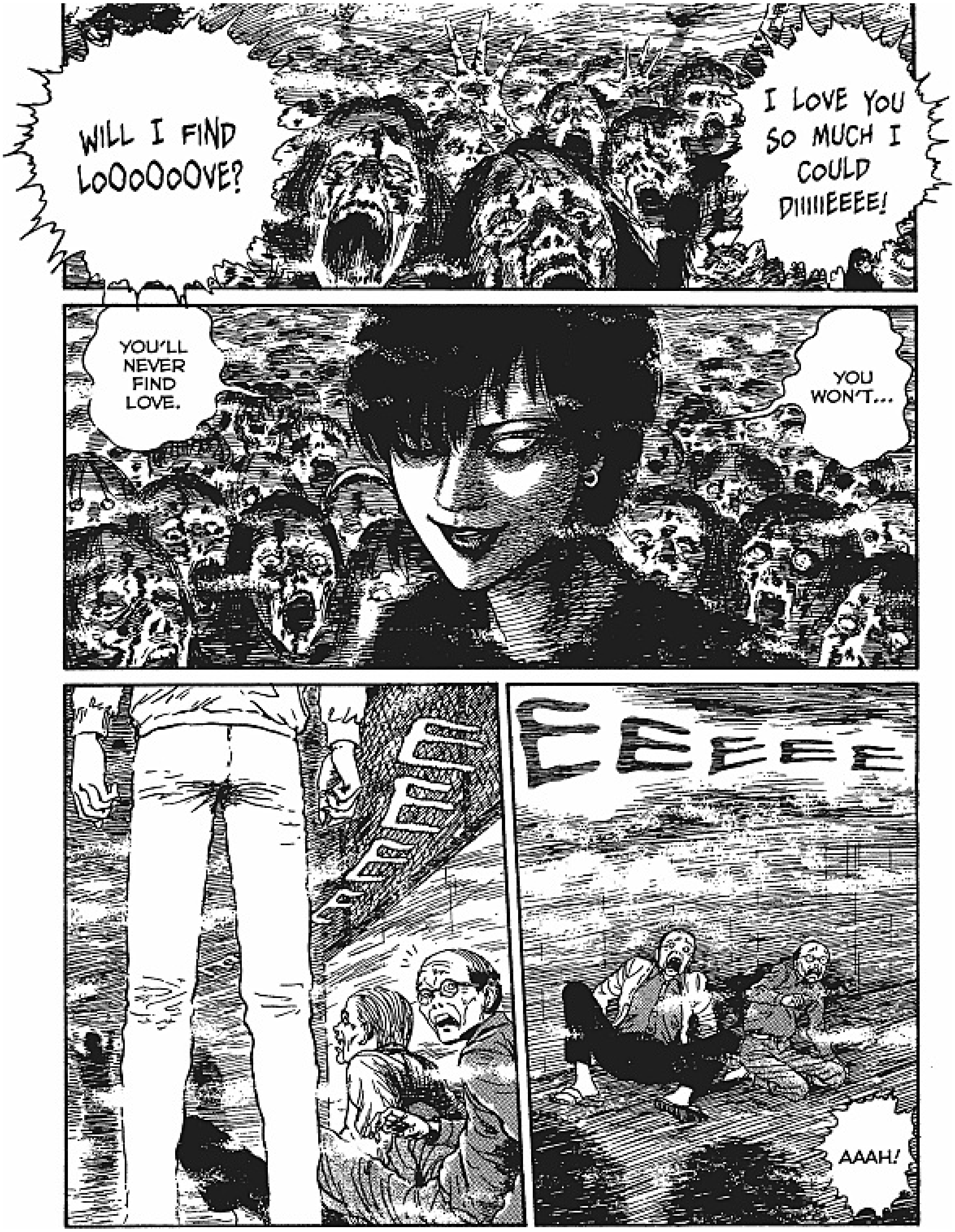

HUFF
HUFF
?
HAAH! HAAH!
WHAT'S GOING ON HERE? WHY THE PANIC?
EEE!
WHK
WHK
HIC!
HM?
WHAT D'YOU MEAN? YOU CAN'T HEAR IT?
OPEN YOUR EARS AND LISTEN REAL CLOSE!
EEEEE
EEEEEE

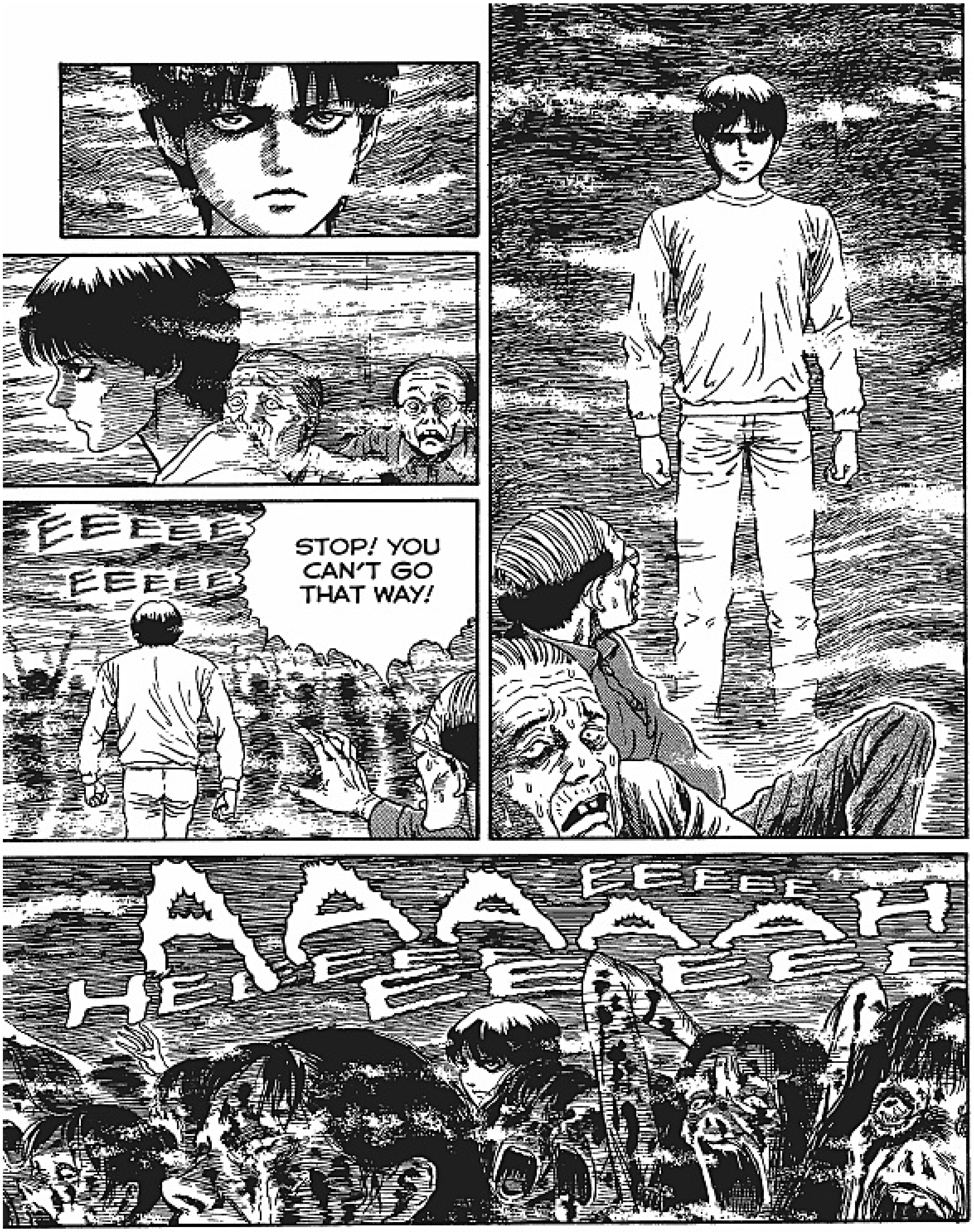

EEEEE
AAAH... SOMEONE'S SCREAMING... NO... IT'S A WHOLE CROWD.
WHAT ON EARTH?
GRAMPS! DON'T GO ANY FARTHER! GO BACK!
IT'S THOSE GIRLS SCREAMING!
WHAT ...? HIC...
THOSE GIRLS?
THE GIRLS FROM THE MASS SUICIDE!!
THEY'RE SCREAMING!!
EEEEEEEE
EEEEEEEE
WHAT ...?
HEEEEEEEE
WHAAAT? DON'T GO TEASING YOUR ELDERS. HIC!
I'M TELLING YOU, IT'S TRUE!! I SAW THEM JUST NOW. THAT'S WHY I'M RUNNING AWAY!
EEEEE
EEEEE

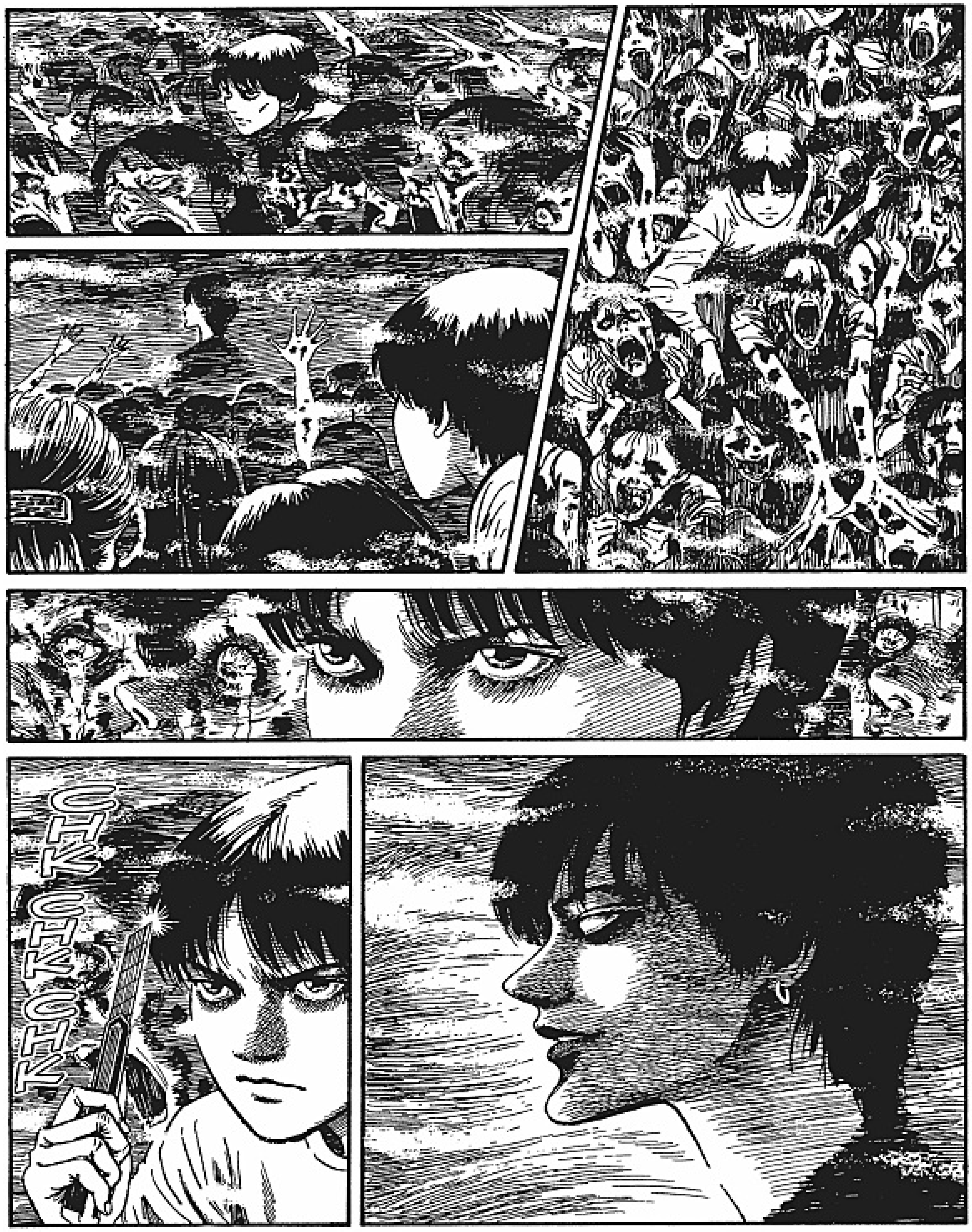

HEEEY, GRAMPS! DON'T!
HMPH. MAKING FUN OF HIS ELDERS.
EEEEEEE
HIC!
EEEEEEE
HEEEEE
EEEEEE
HEEEEE
THESE YOUNG THINGS REALLY CAN BELT IT OUT, HM? HIC!
PROB'LY ALL OVER SOME POP STAR. NO RESPECT FOR THE LATE HOUR.

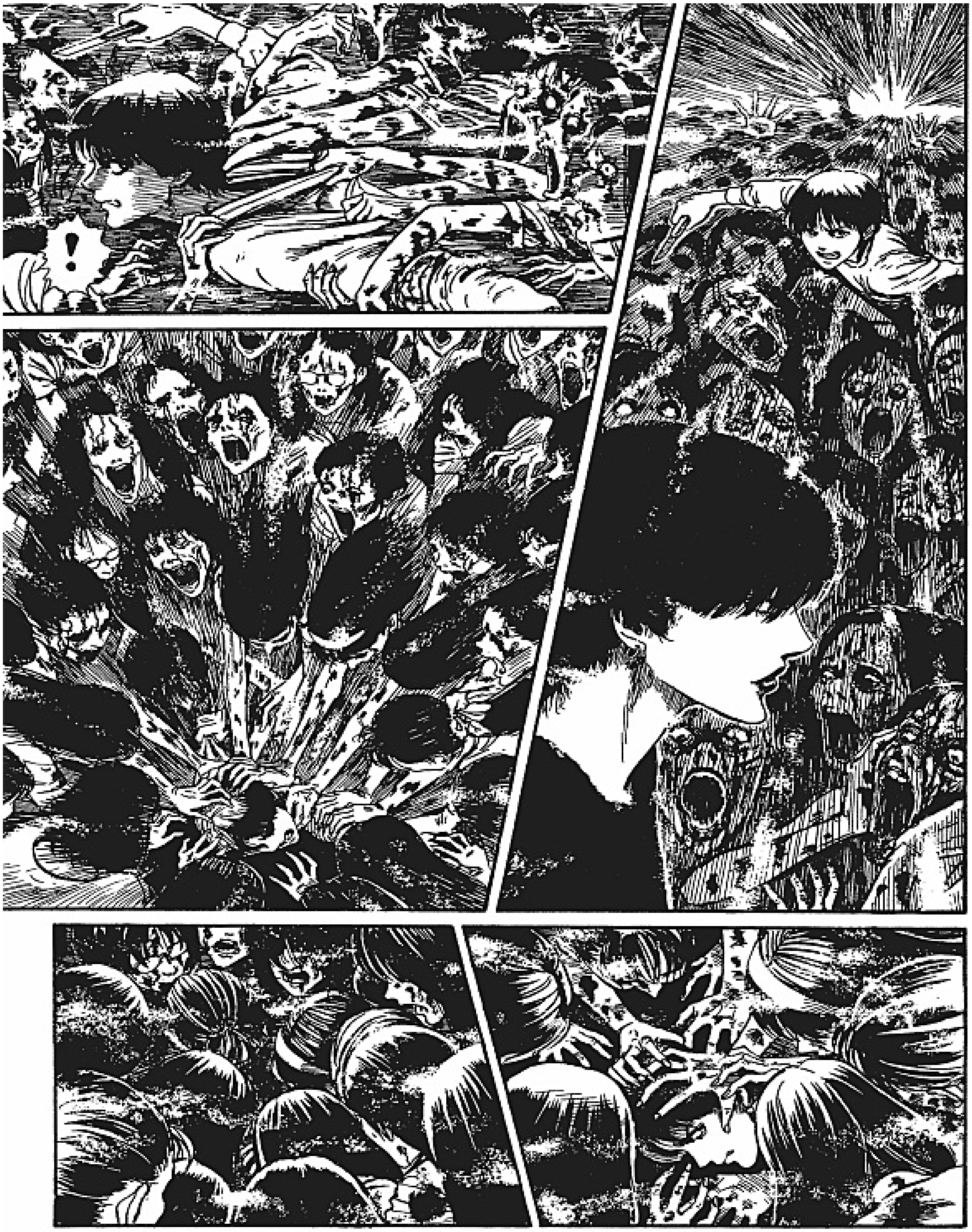

HEY! YOU LOT!
DO YOU KNOW WHAT TIME IT IS?
HEY!
PAT

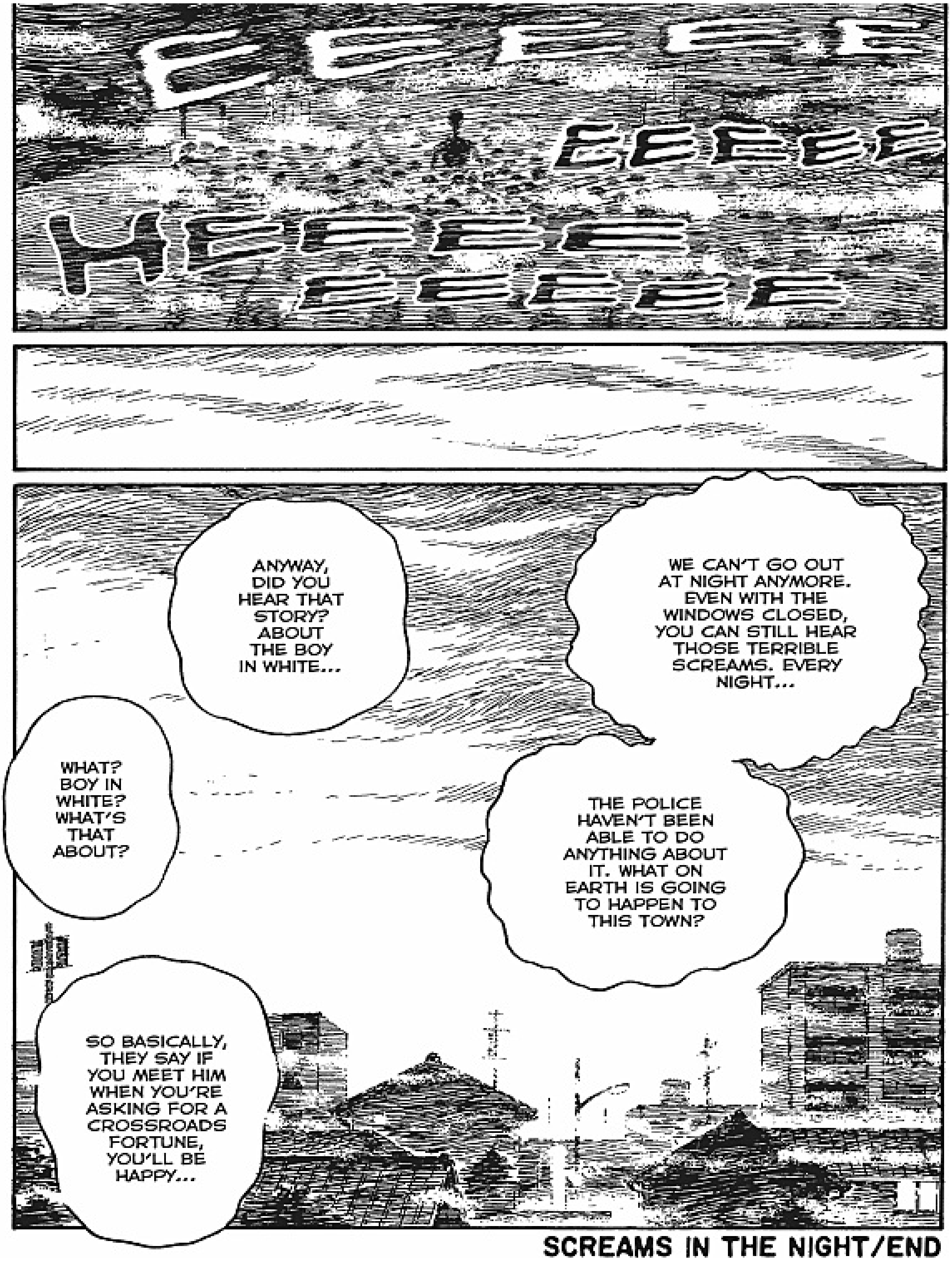

EEEEEEE
HEEEEEEE


WILL I FIND LOOOOOOVE?
I LOVE YOU SO MUCH I COULD DIIIIEEEE!
YOU'LL NEVER FIND LOVE.
YOU WON'T...
EEEEEE
EEEEEE
AAAH!

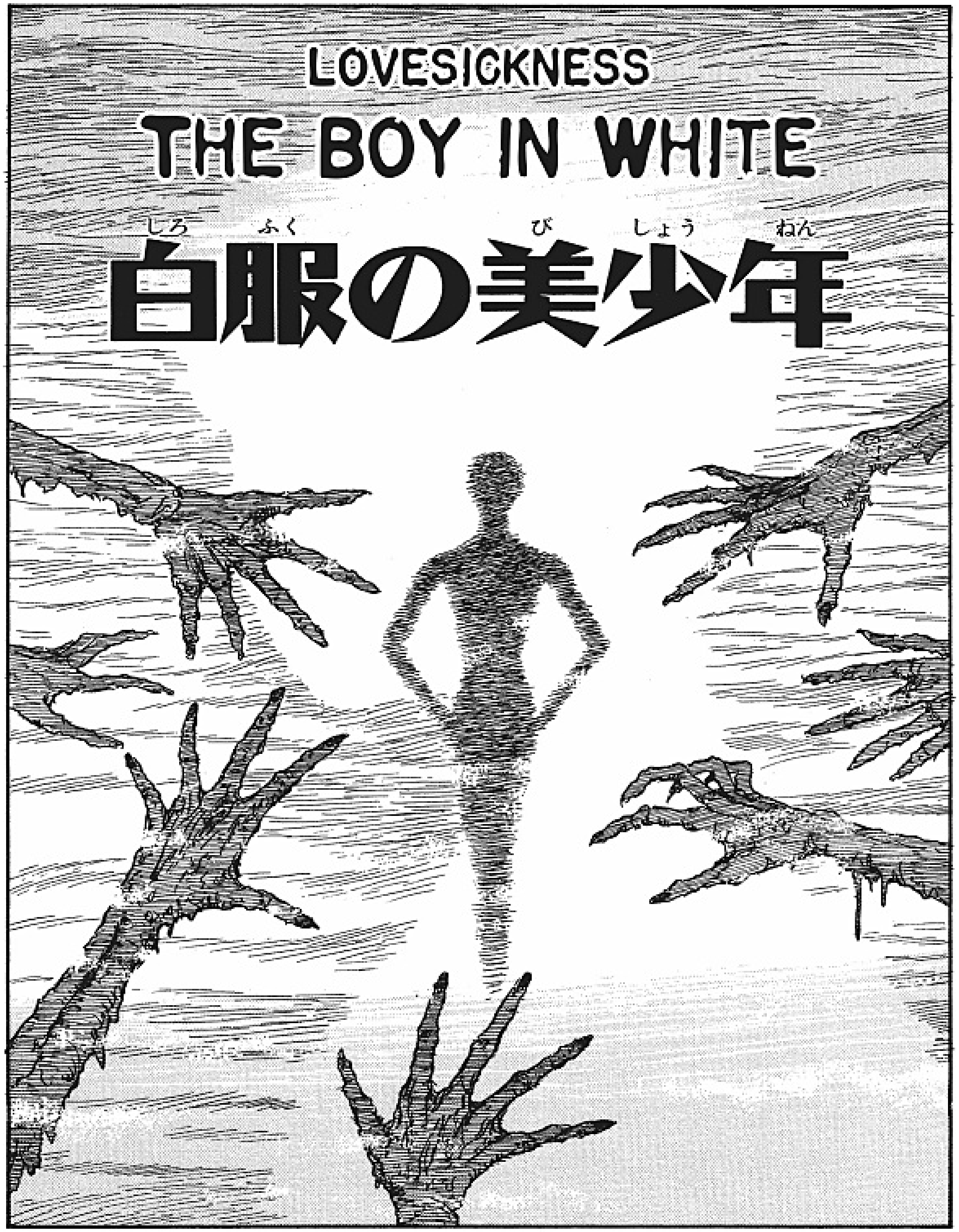

EEEEE
EEEEE
STOP! YOU CAN'T GO THAT WAY!
AAAAAH
EEEEE
HEEEEEEEEE


CHK CHK CHK




EEEEE
EEEEEE
HEEEEE
EEEEEE
WE CAN'T GO OUT AT NIGHT ANYMORE. EVEN WITH THE WINDOWS CLOSED, YOU CAN STILL HEAR THOSE TERRIBLE SCREAMS. EVERY NIGHT...
THE POLICE HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO DO ANYTHING ABOUT IT. WHAT ON EARTH IS GOING TO HAPPEN TO THIS TOWN?
ANYWAY, DID YOU HEAR THAT STORY? ABOUT THE BOY IN WHITE...
WHAT? BOY IN WHITE? WHAT'S THAT ABOUT?
SO BASICALLY, THEY SAY IF YOU MEET HIM WHEN YOU'RE ASKING FOR A CROSSROADS FORTUNE, YOU'LL BE HAPPY...

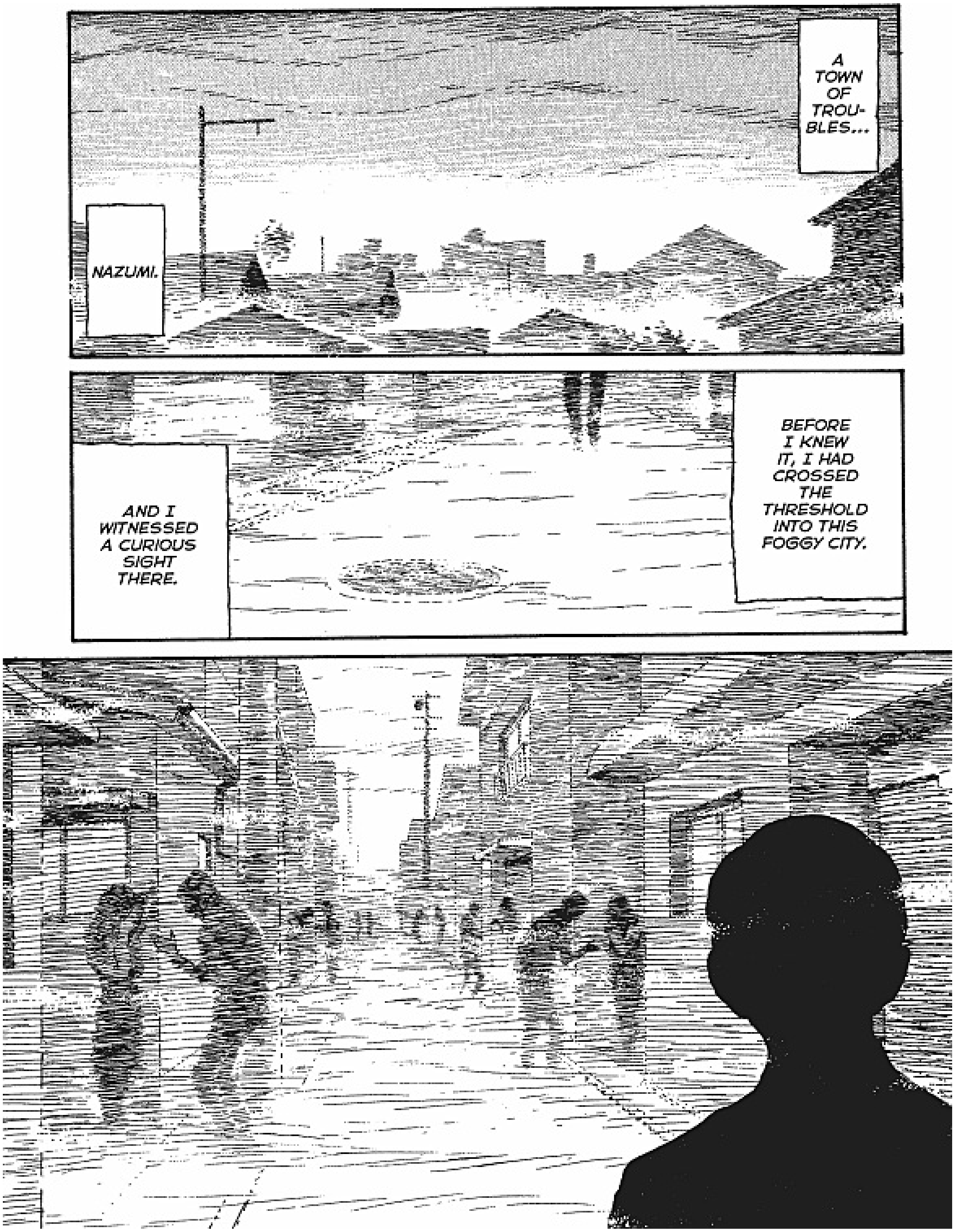
SCREAMS IN THE NIGHT/END

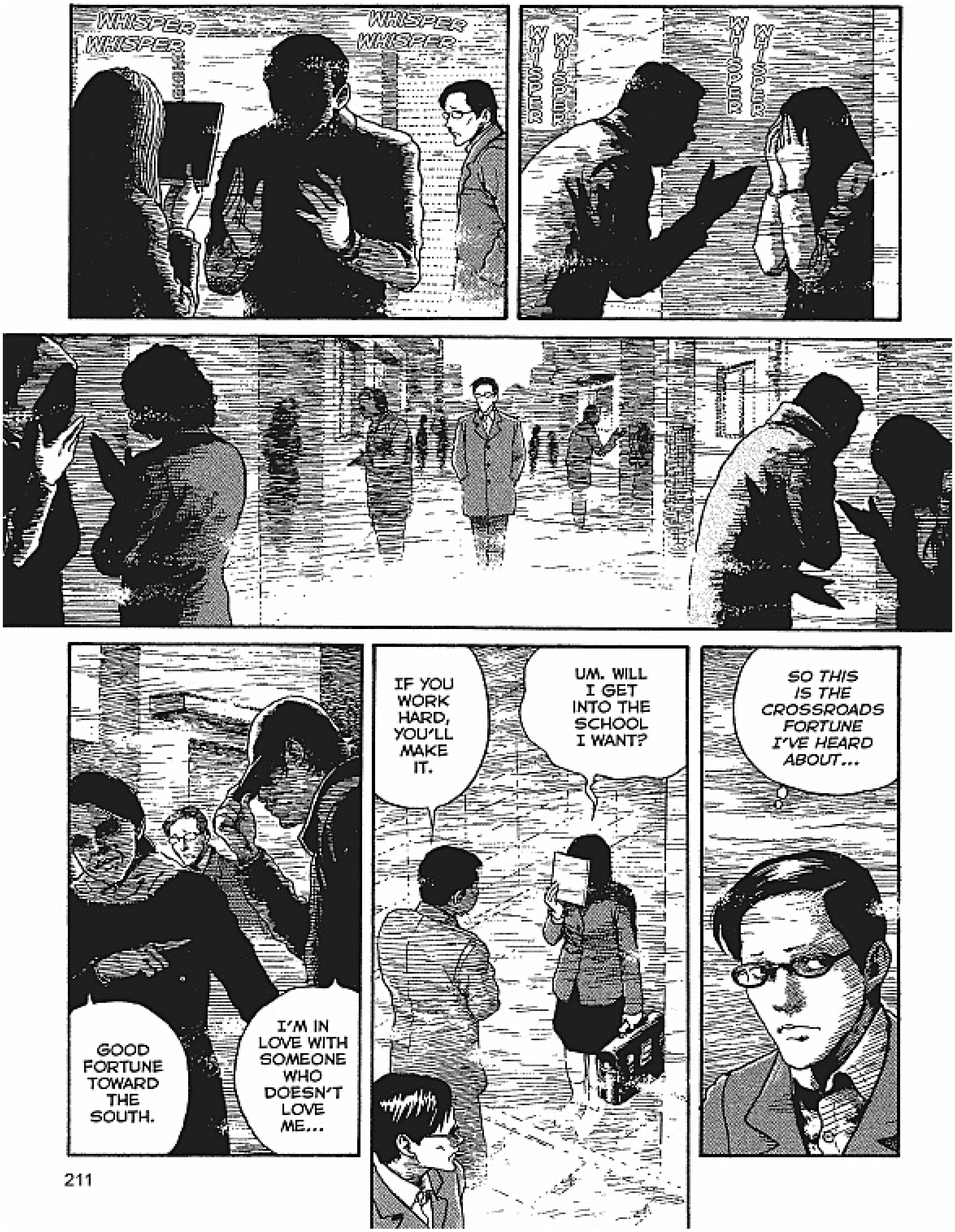


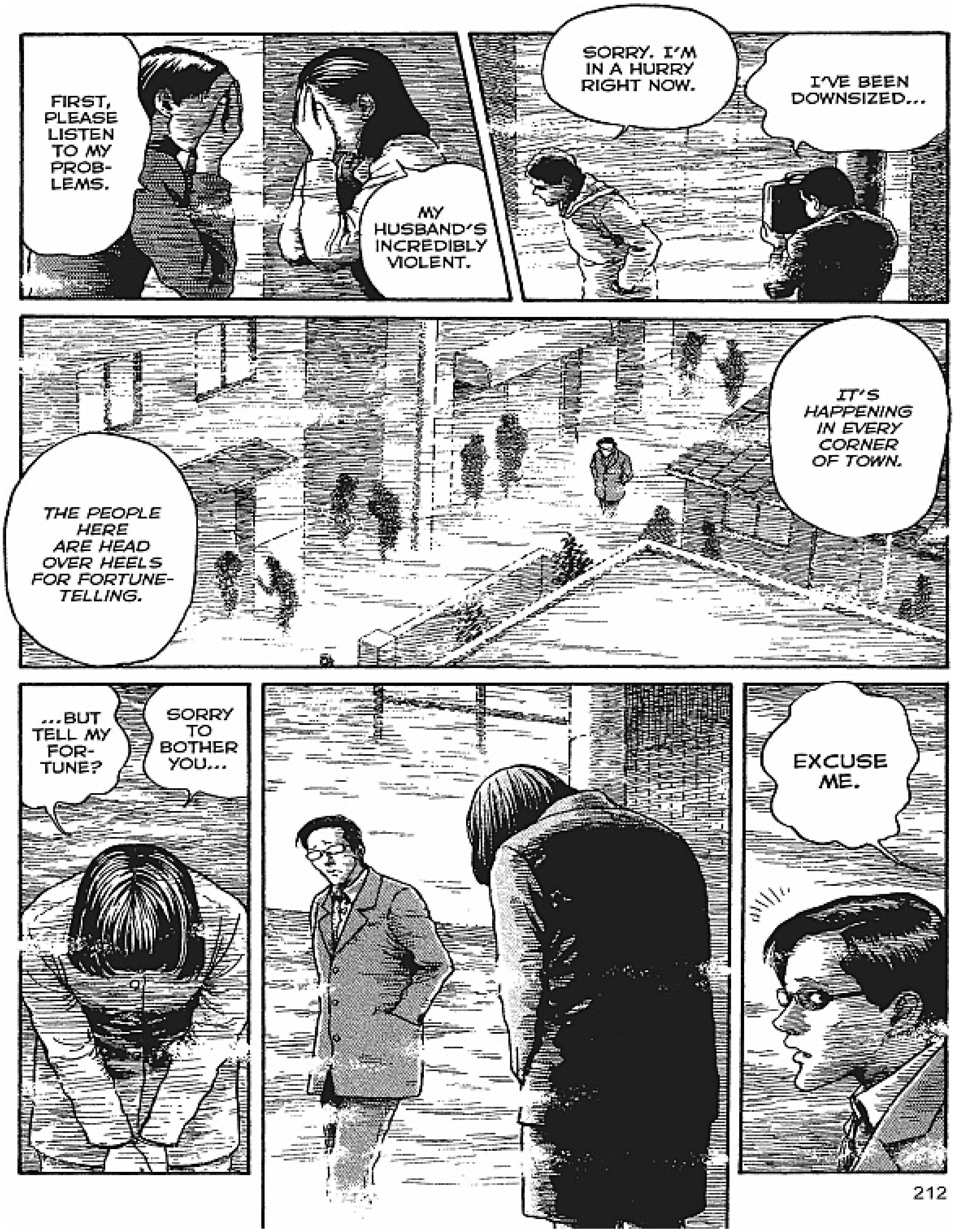
LOVESICKNESS

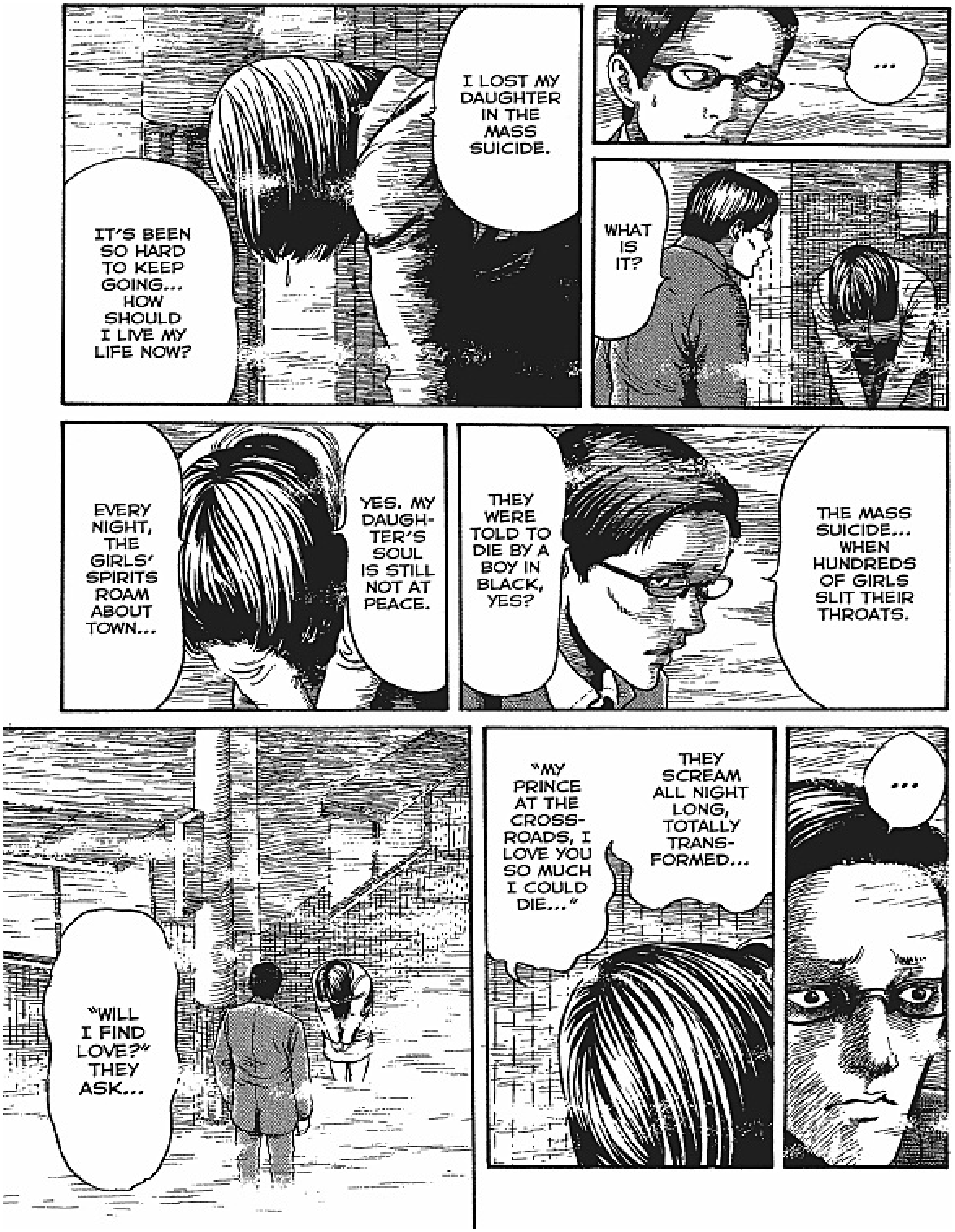
THE BOY IN WHITE

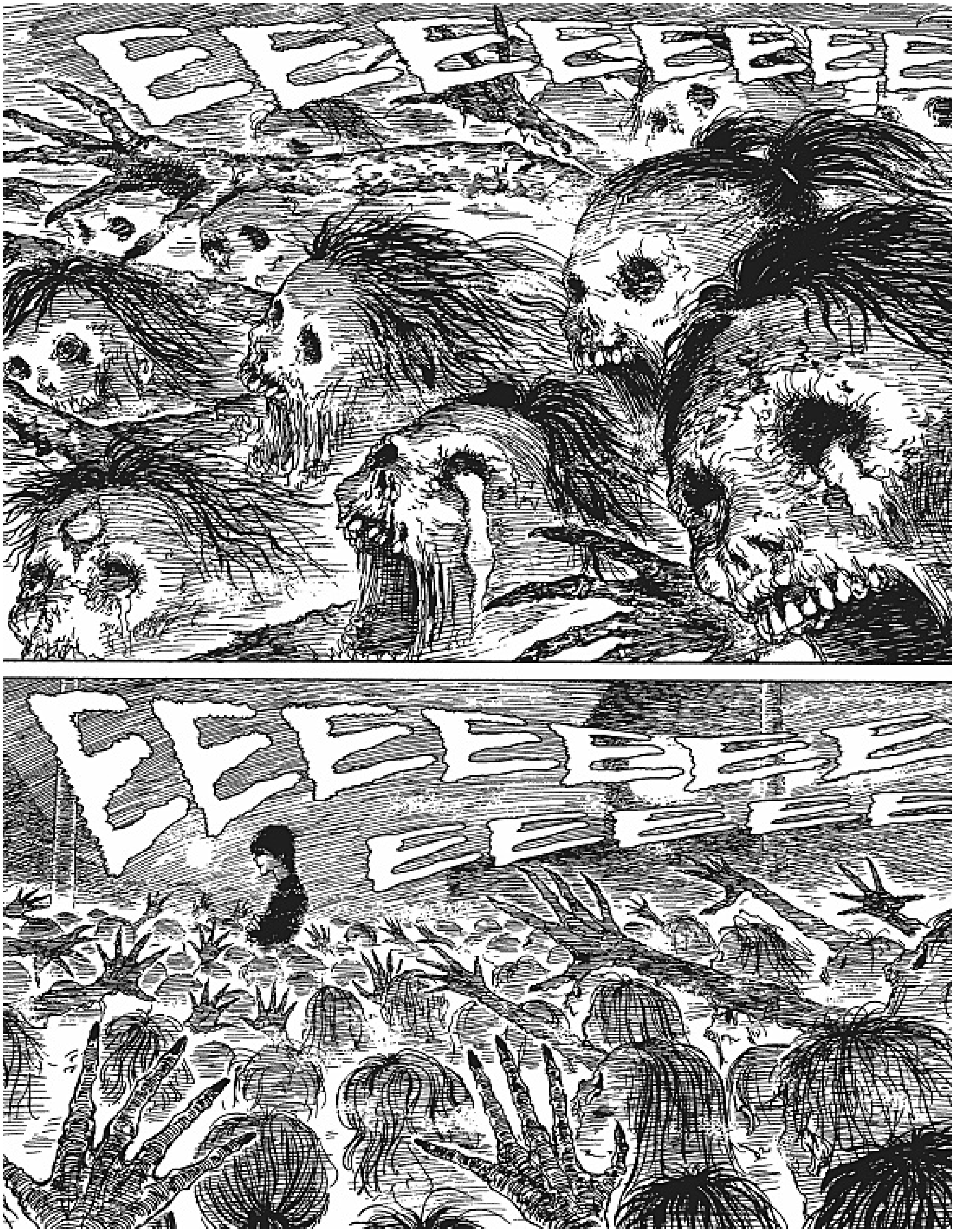
白服の美少年

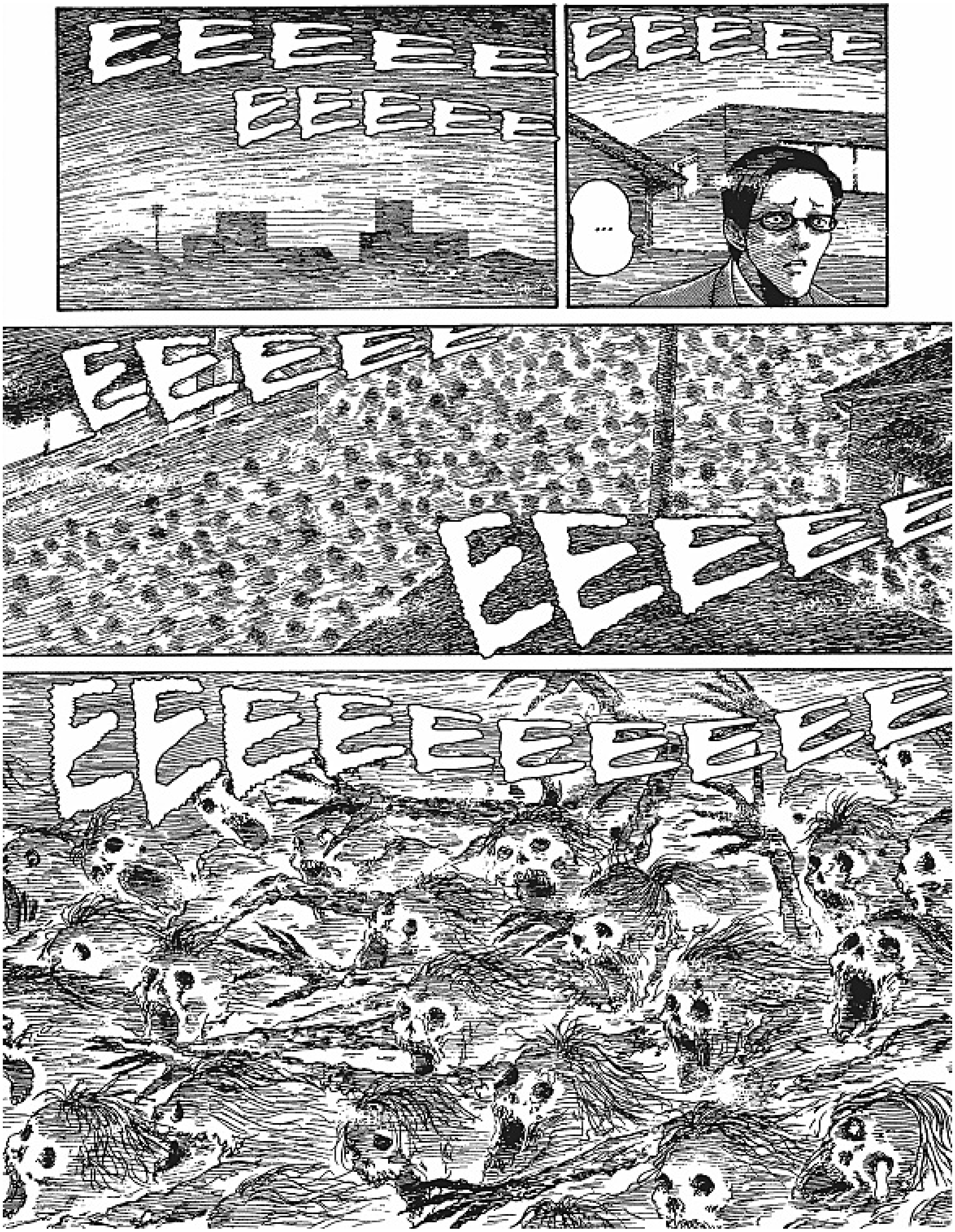

A TOWN OF TROUBLES...
NAZUMI.
BEFORE I KNEW IT, I HAD CROSSED THE THRESHOLD INTO THIS FOGGY CITY.
AND I WITNESSED A CURIOUS SIGHT THERE.

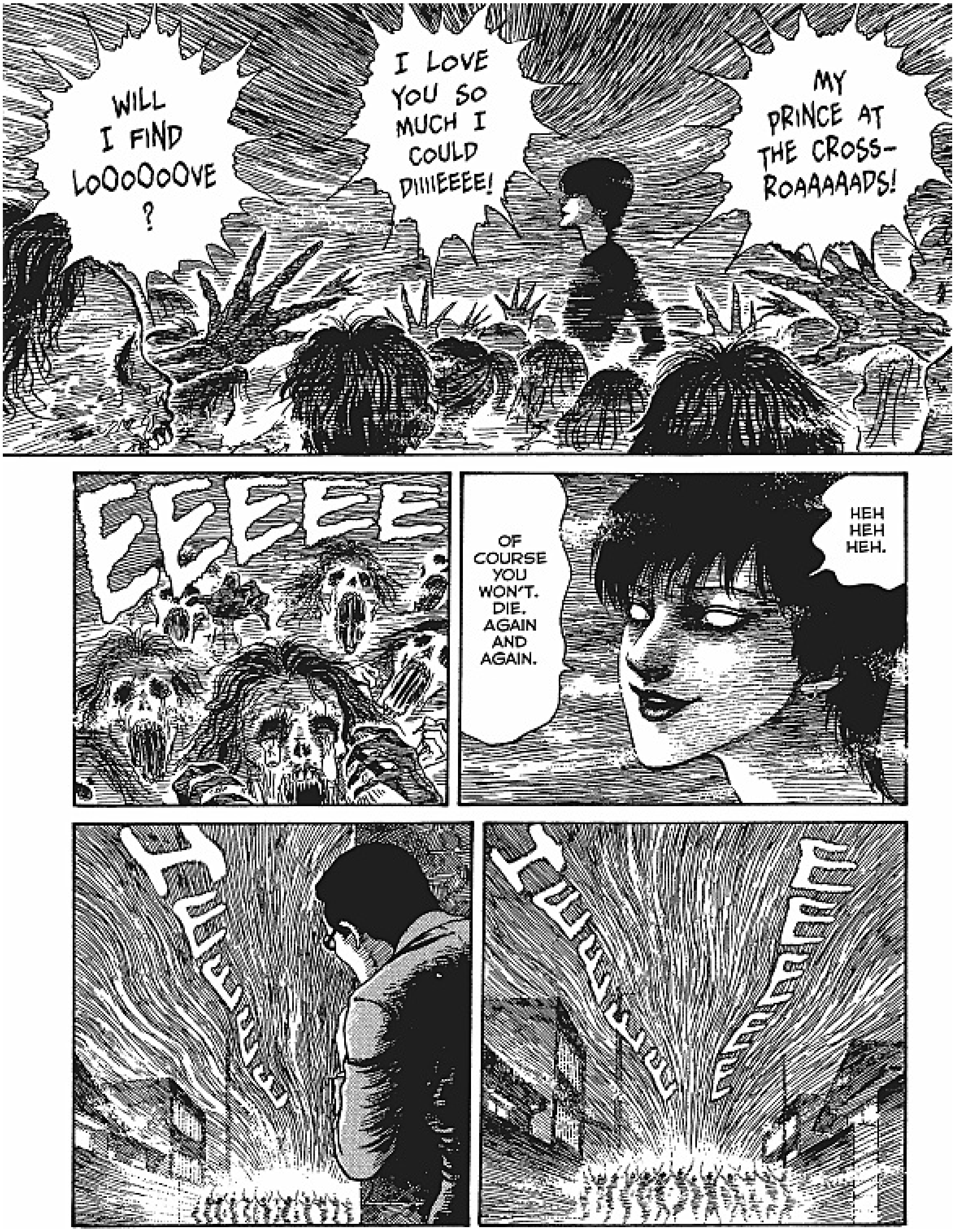

WHISPER
WHISPER
WHISPER
WHISPER
WHISPER
WHISPER
WHISPER
WHISPER
SO THIS IS THE CROSSROADS FORTUNE I'VE HEARD ABOUT...
UM. WILL I GET INTO THE SCHOOL I WANT?
IF YOU WORK HARD, YOU'LL MAKE IT.
I'M IN LOVE WITH SOMEONE WHO DOESN'T LOVE ME...
GOOD FORTUNE TOWARD THE SOUTH.

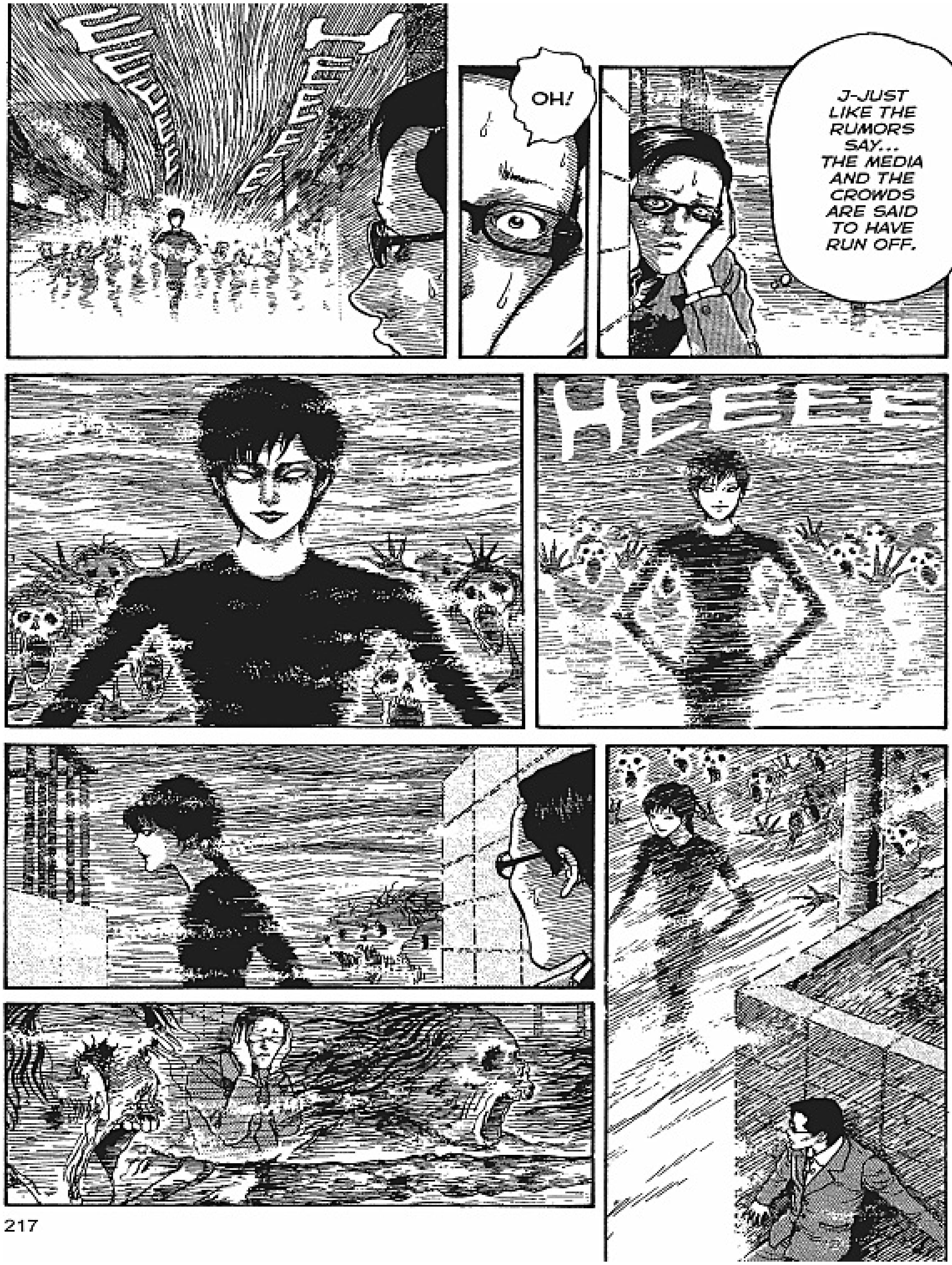

FIRST, PLEASE LISTEN TO MY PROBLEMS.
MY HUSBAND'S INCREDIBLY VIOLENT.
SORRY. I'M IN A HURRY RIGHT NOW.
I'VE BEEN DOWNSIZED...
THE PEOPLE HERE ARE HEAD OVER HEELS FOR FORTUNE-TELLING.
IT'S HAPPENING IN EVERY CORNER OF TOWN.
SORRY TO BOTHER YOU...
...BUT TELL MY FORTUNE?
EXCUSE ME.

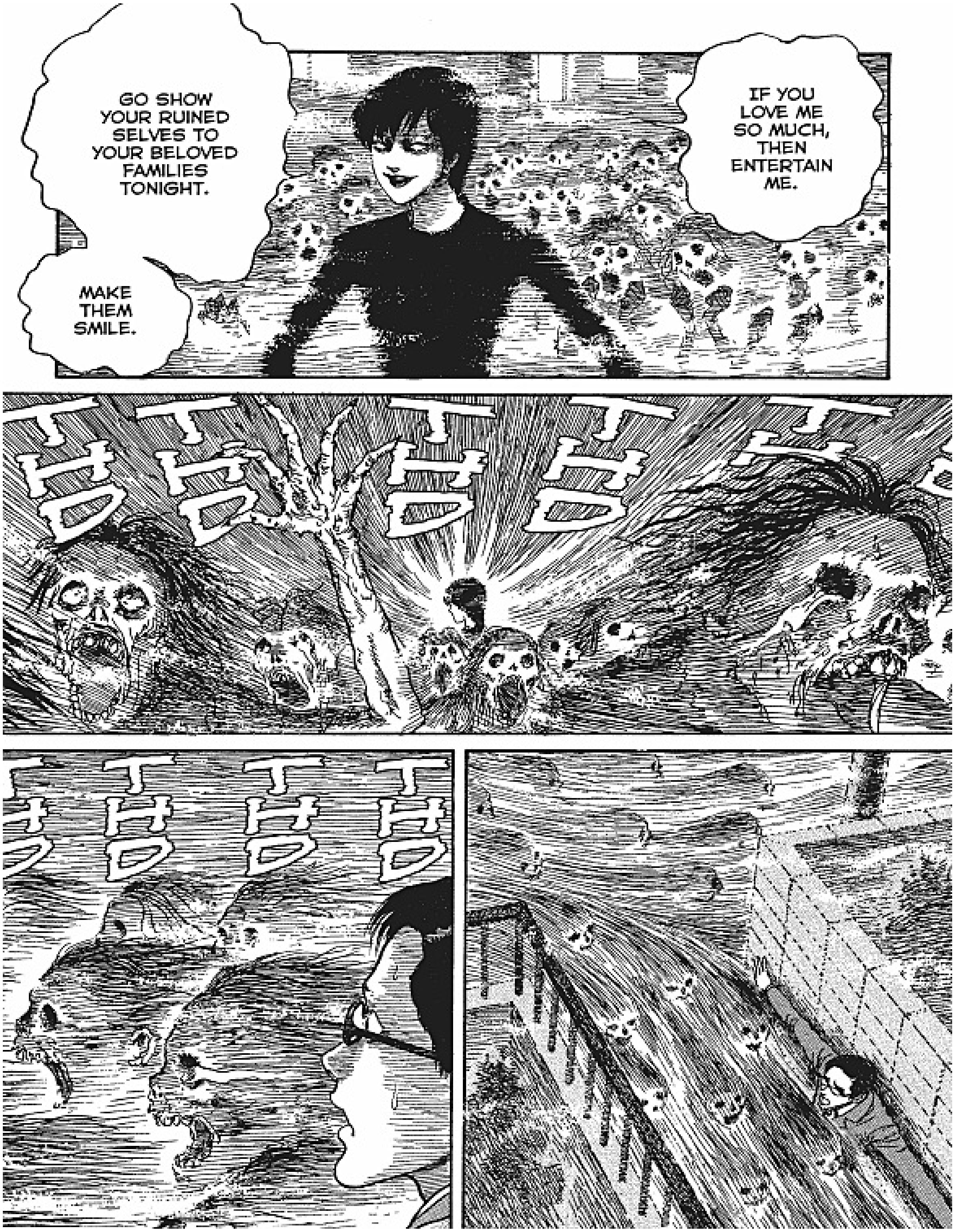

I LOST MY DAUGHTER IN THE MASS SUICIDE.
IT'S BEEN SO HARD TO KEEP GOING... HOW SHOULD I LIVE MY LIFE NOW?
...
WHAT IS IT?
THE MASS SUICIDE... WHEN HUNDREDS OF GIRLS SLIT THEIR THROATS.
THEY WERE TOLD TO DIE BY A BOY IN BLACK, YES?
YES. MY DAUGHTER'S SOUL IS STILL NOT AT PEACE.
EVERY NIGHT, THE GIRLS' SPIRITS ROAM ABOUT TOWN...
...
THEY SCREAM ALL NIGHT LONG, TOTALLY TRANSFORMED...
"MY PRINCE AT THE CROSSROADS, I LOVE YOU SO MUCH I COULD DIE..."
"WILL I FIND LOVE?" THEY ASK...

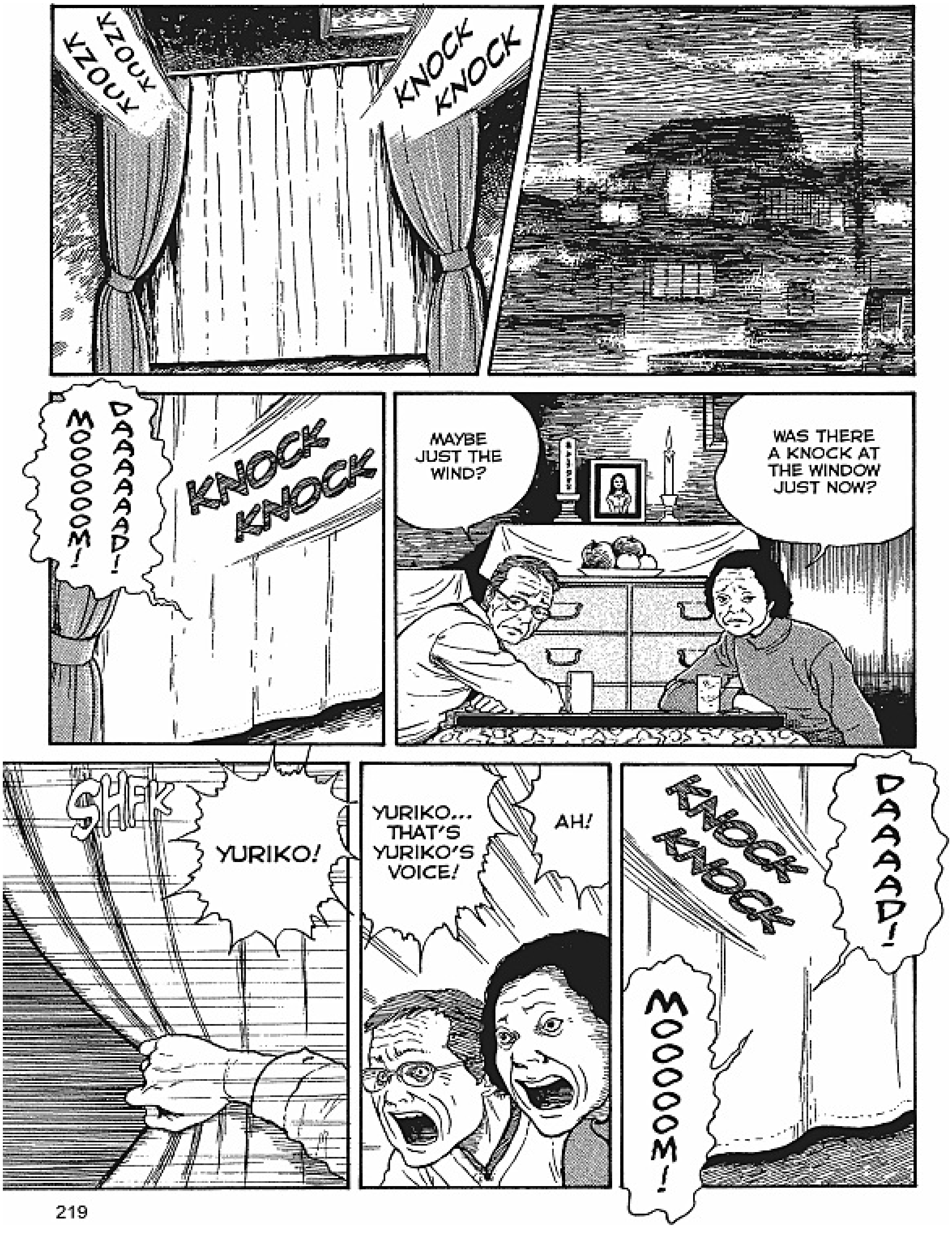

EEEEEEEEEE
EEEEEEEEE
EEEEEEE

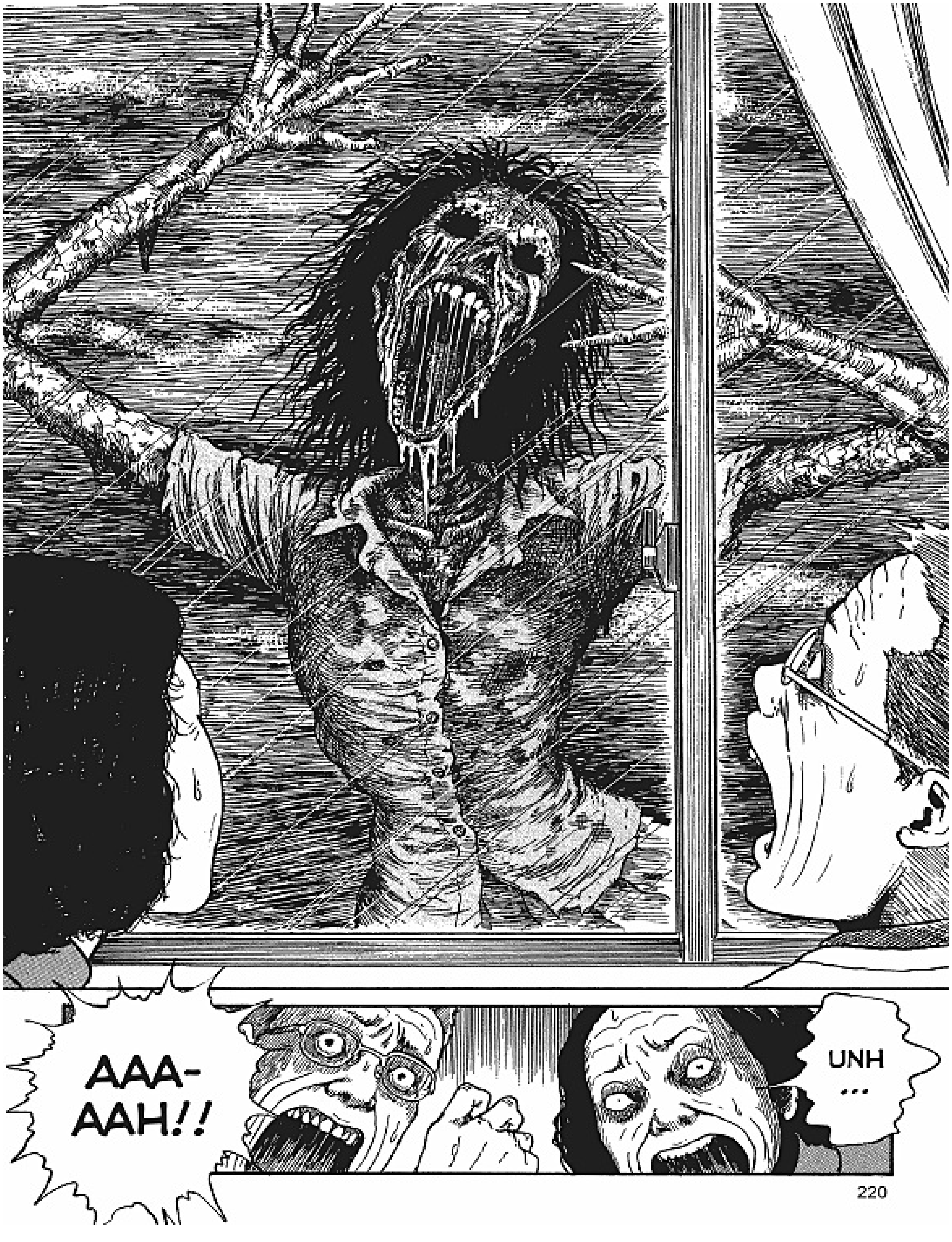

EEEEEE
...
EEEEEE
EEEEEE
EEEEEE
EEEEEE
EEEEEEEEEEE

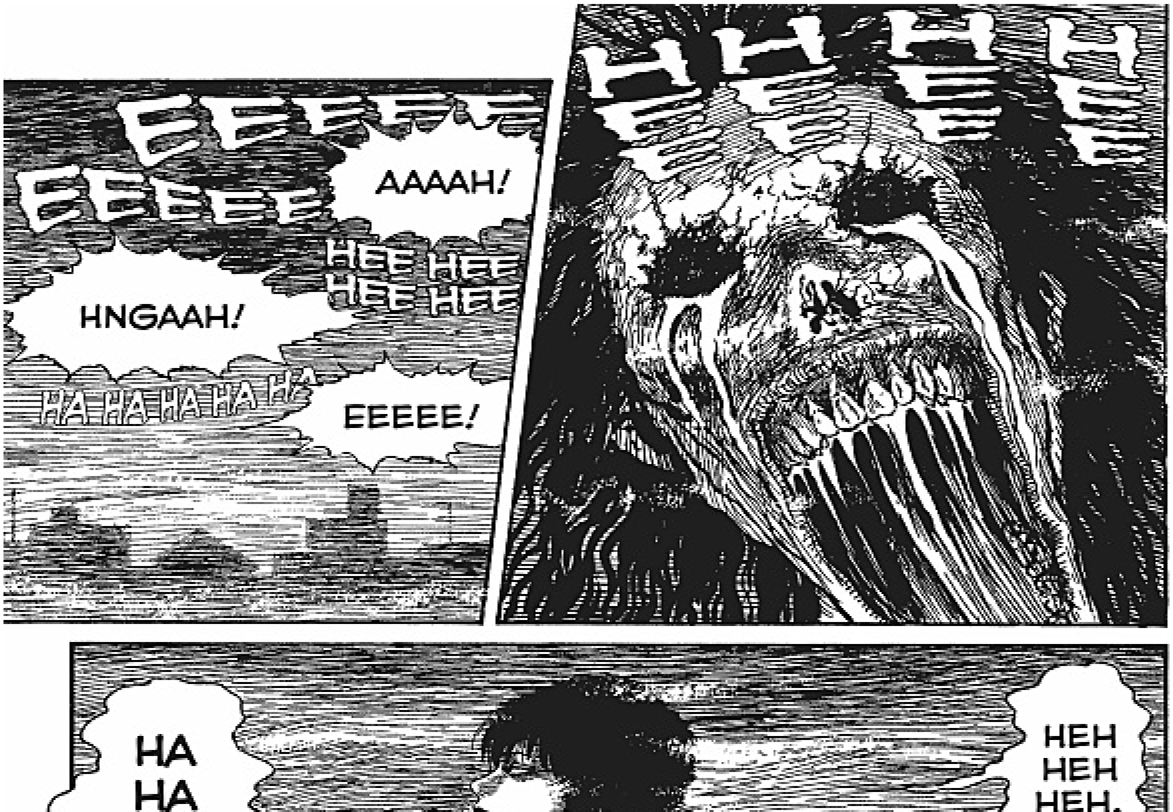

MY PRINCE AT THE CROSS-ROAAAAADS!
I LOVE YOU SO MUCH I COULD DIIIIEEEE!
WILL I FIND LOOOOOOVE?
HEH HEH HEH.
OF COURSE YOU WON'T. DIE. AGAIN AND AGAIN.
EEEEE
HEEEEEEE
HEEEEEE

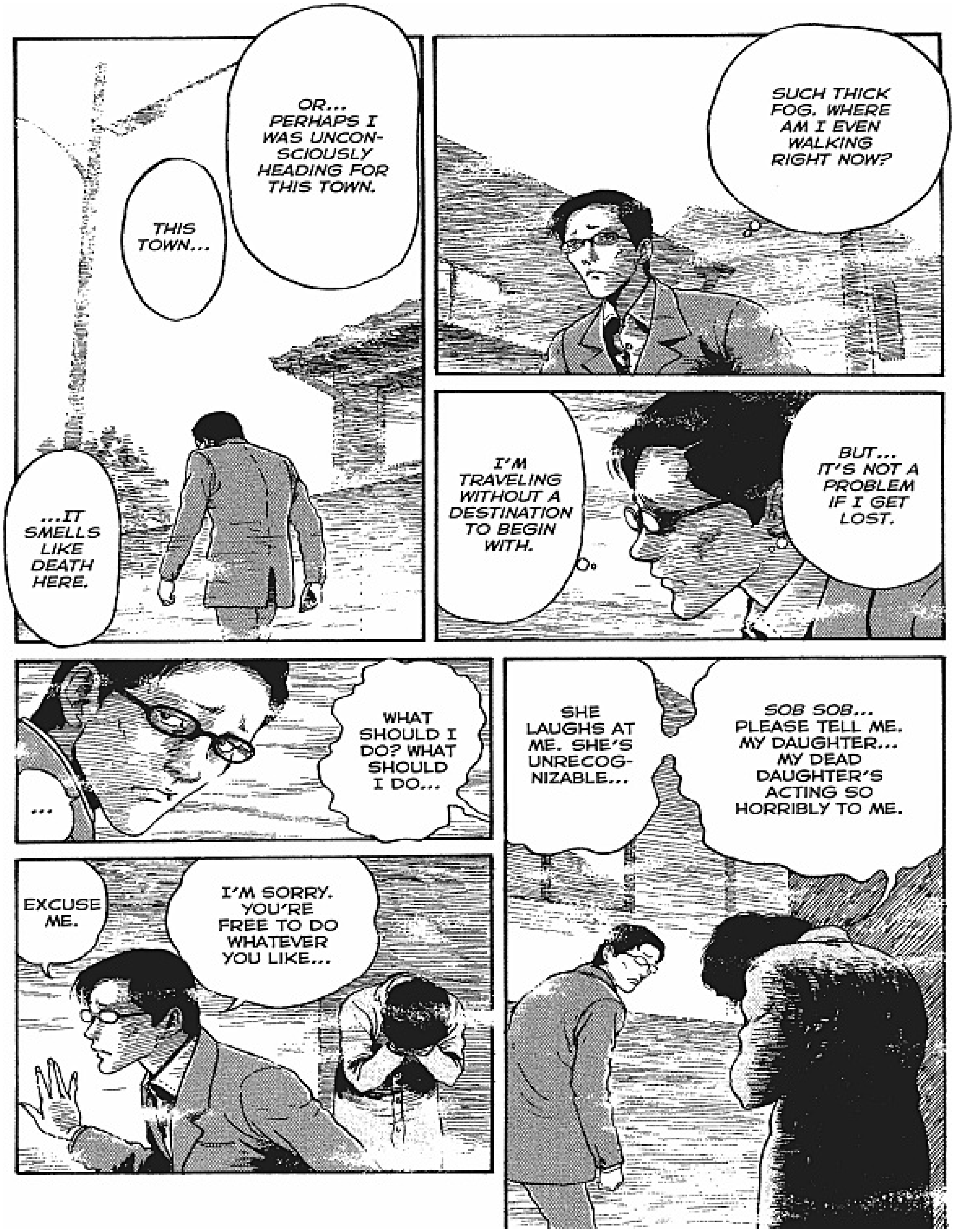

J-JUST LIKE THE RUMORS SAY... THE MEDIA AND THE CROWDS ARE SAID TO HAVE RUN OFF.
OH!
HEEEEE
HEEEE

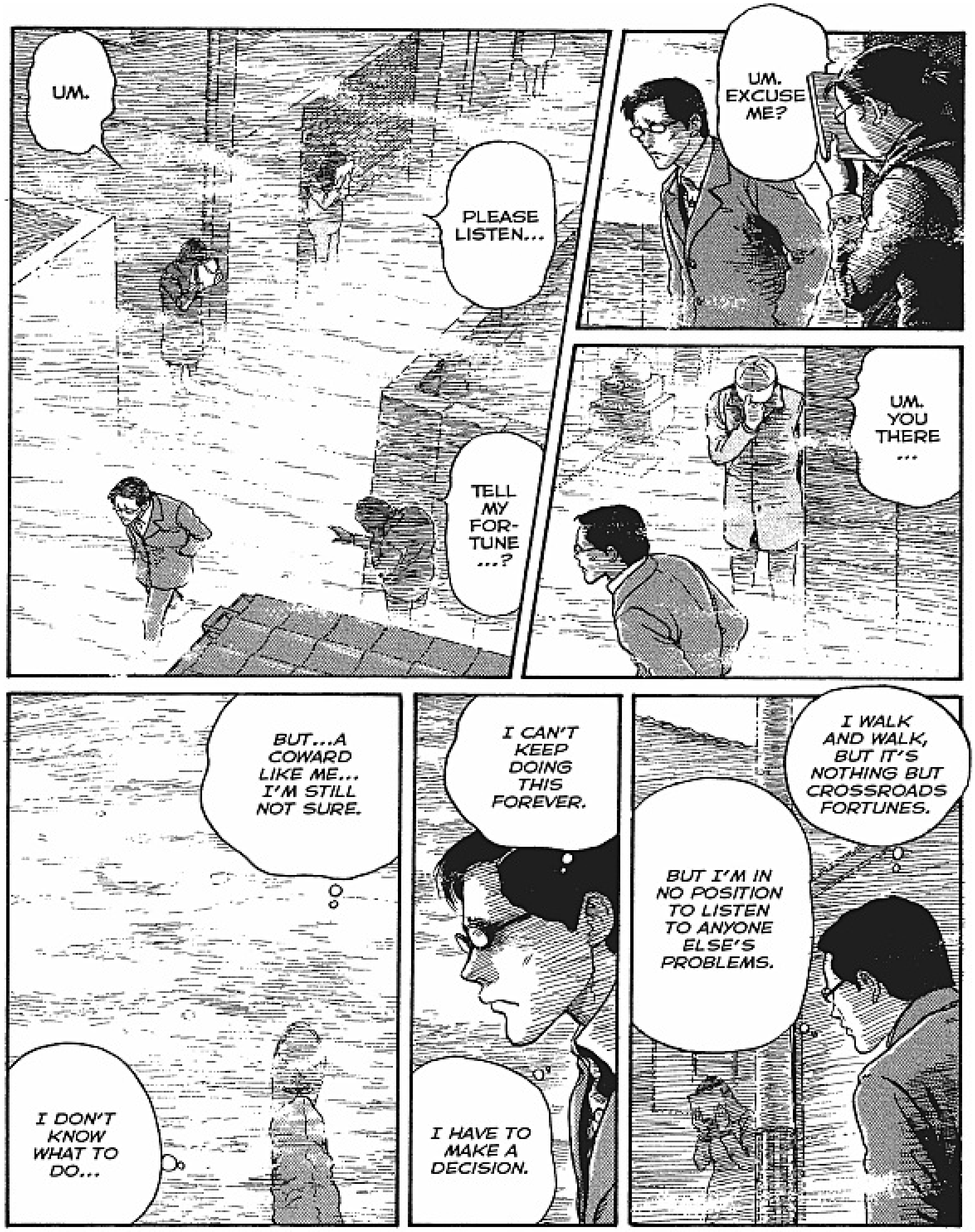

IF YOU LOVE ME SO MUCH, THEN ENTERTAIN ME.
GO SHOW YOUR RUINED SELVES TO YOUR BELOVED FAMILIES TONIGHT.
MAKE THEM SMILE.
THUD
THUD
THUD
THUD
THUD
THUD
THUD
THUD
THUD
THUD

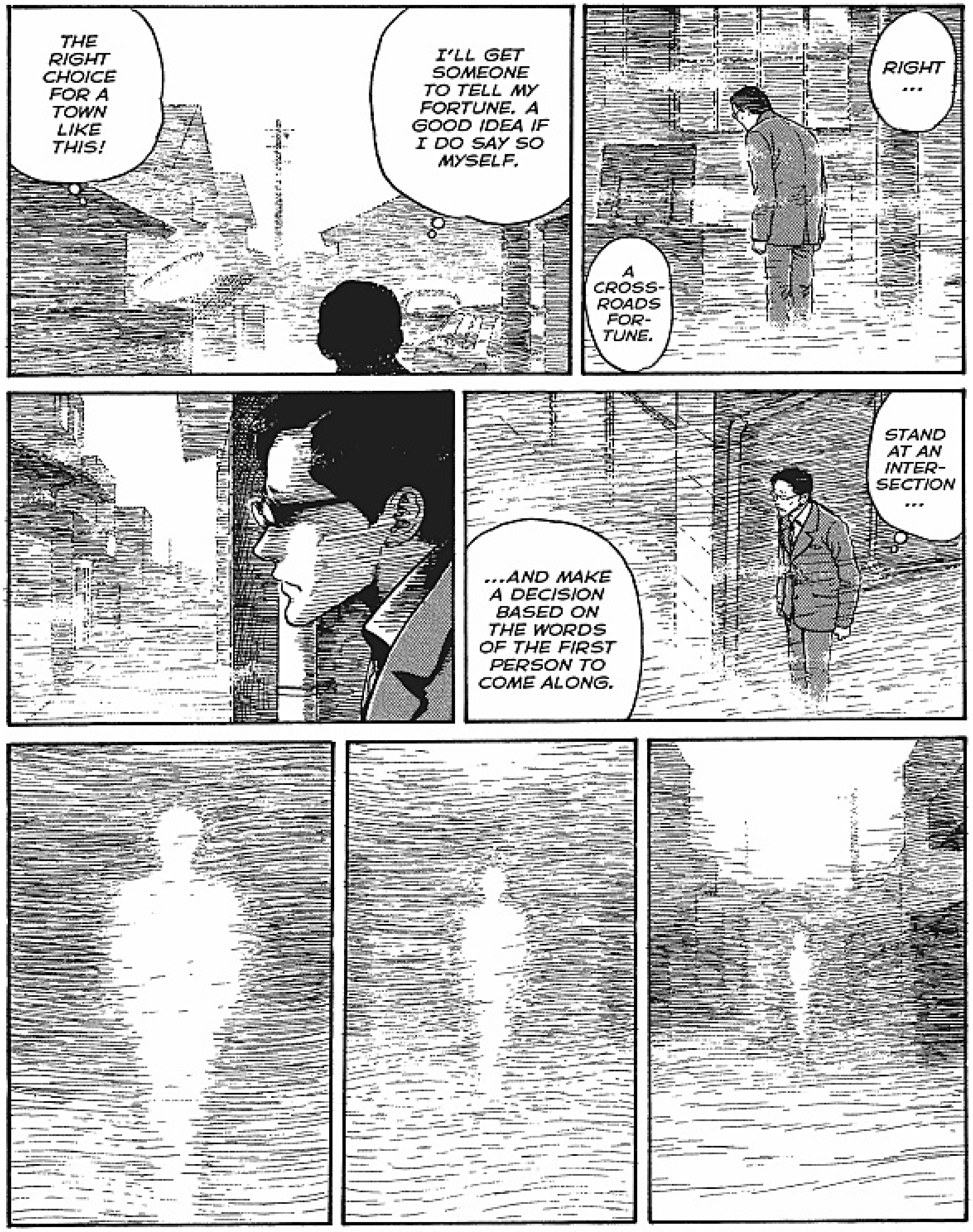

KNOCK KNOCK
VZOUY VZOUY
DAAAAAAAD!
MOOOOOOM!
KNOCK KNOCK
WAS THERE A KNOCK AT THE WINDOW JUST NOW?
MAYBE JUST THE WIND?
DAAAAAD!
MOOOOOM!
KNOCK KNOCK
AH!
YURIKO... THAT'S YURIKO'S VOICE!
YURIKO!
SHFK

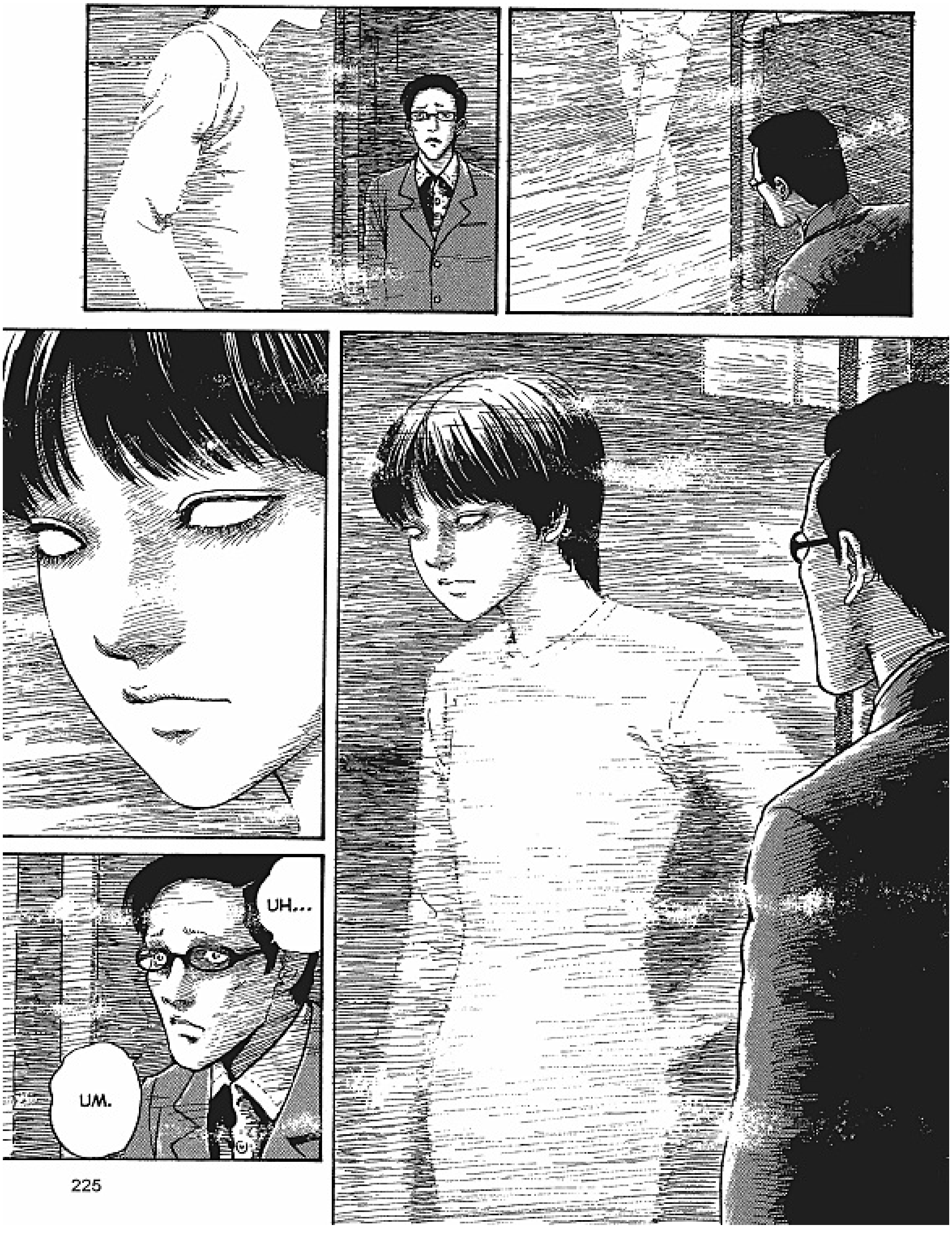

UNH
...
AAA-
AAH!!

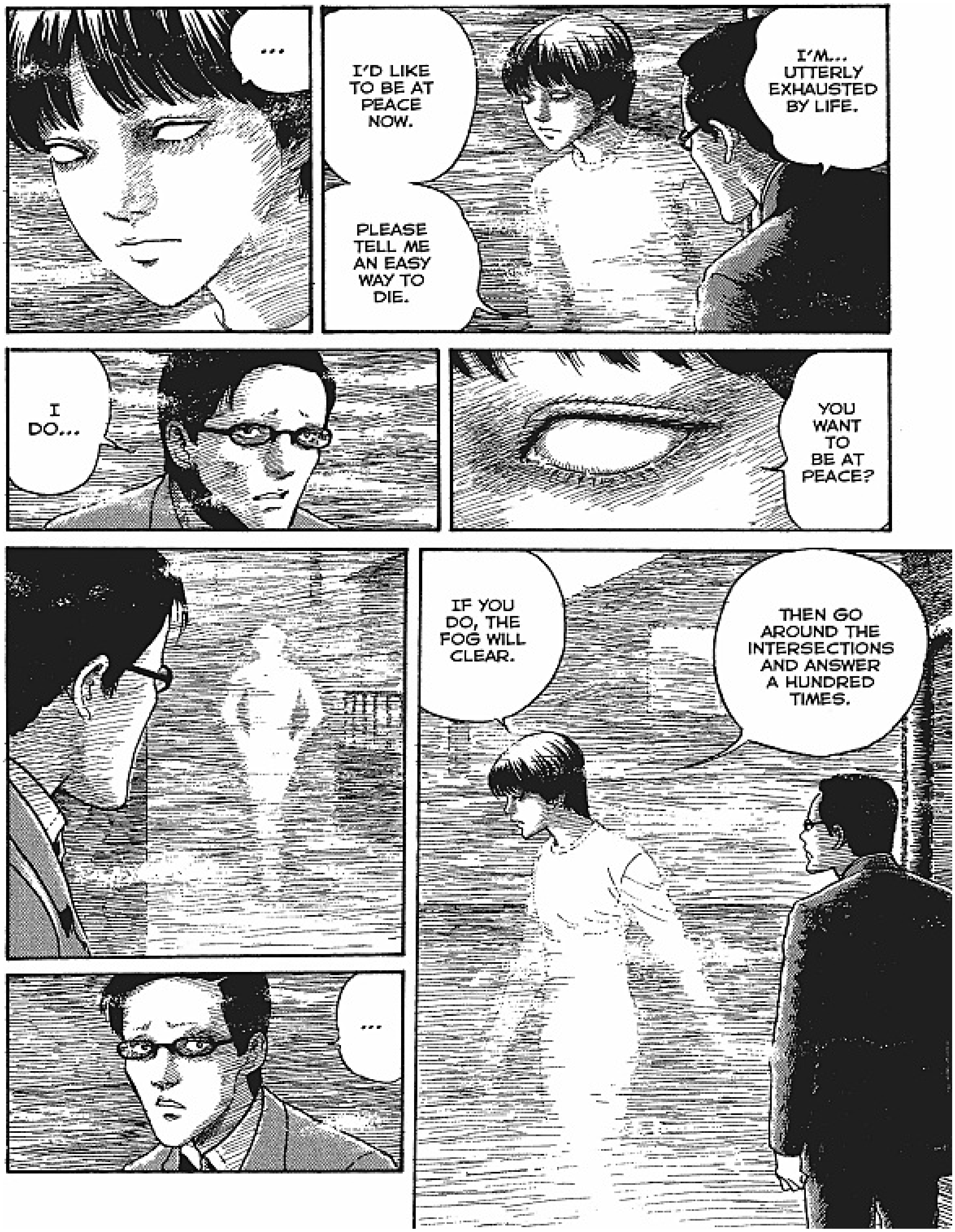

HHHHH EEEEE
EEEEE EEEEE
AAAAH!
HEE HEE HEE HEE
HNGAAH!
HA HA HA HA HA
EEEEE!
HEH HEH HEH.
HA HA HA!
EEEEEE
HEEEEEE

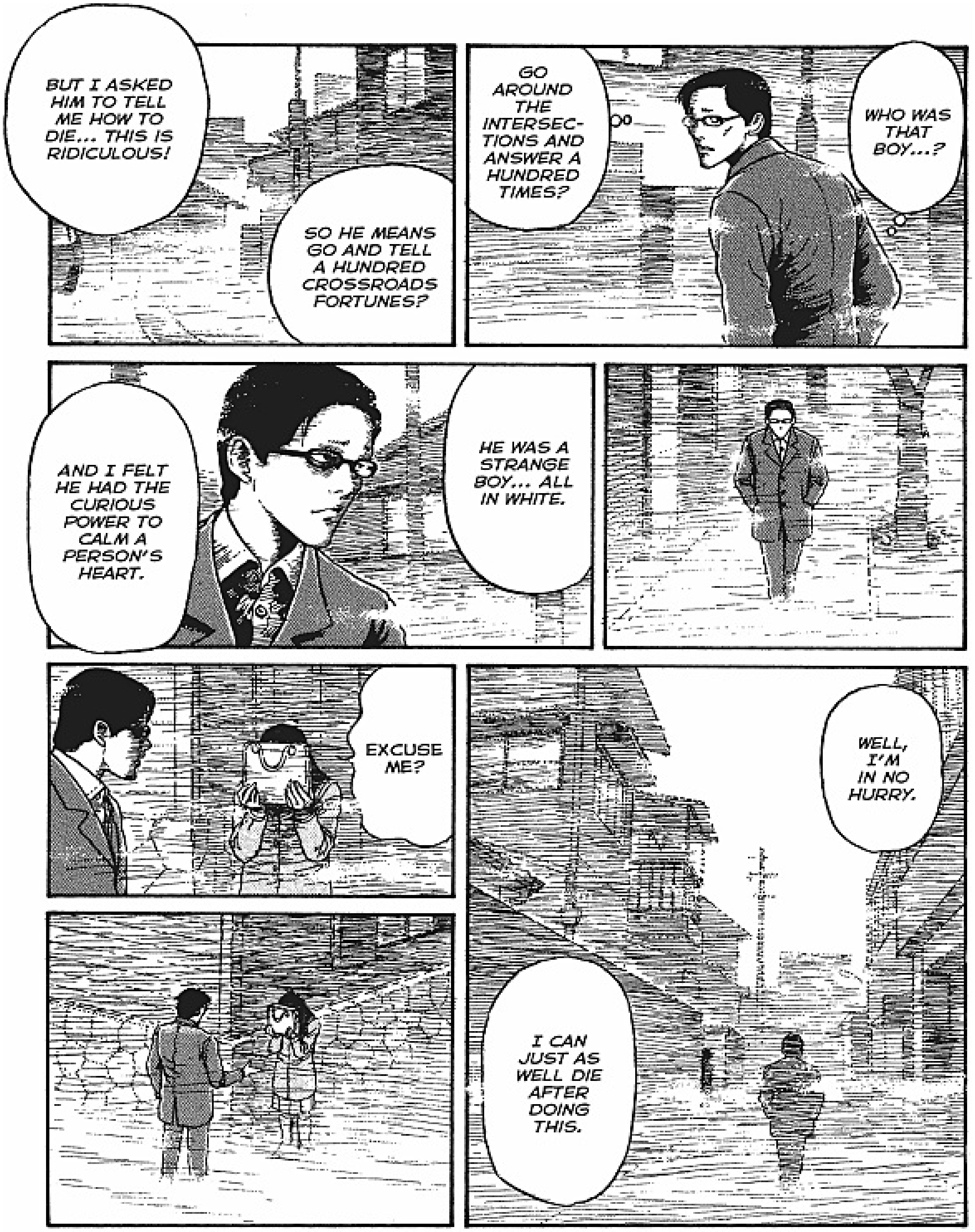

SUCH THICK FOG. WHERE AM I EVEN WALKING RIGHT NOW?
BUT... IT'S NOT A PROBLEM IF I GET LOST.
I'M TRAVELING WITHOUT A DESTINATION TO BEGIN WITH.
OR... PERHAPS I WAS UNCONSCIOUSLY HEADING FOR THIS TOWN.
THIS TOWN...
...IT SMELLS LIKE DEATH HERE.
SOB SOB... PLEASE TELL ME. MY DAUGHTER... MY DEAD DAUGHTER'S ACTING SO HORRIBLY TO ME.
SHE LAUGHS AT ME. SHE'S UNRECOGNIZABLE...
WHAT SHOULD I DO? WHAT SHOULD I DO...
...
I'M SORRY. YOU'RE FREE TO DO WHATEVER YOU LIKE...
EXCUSE ME.

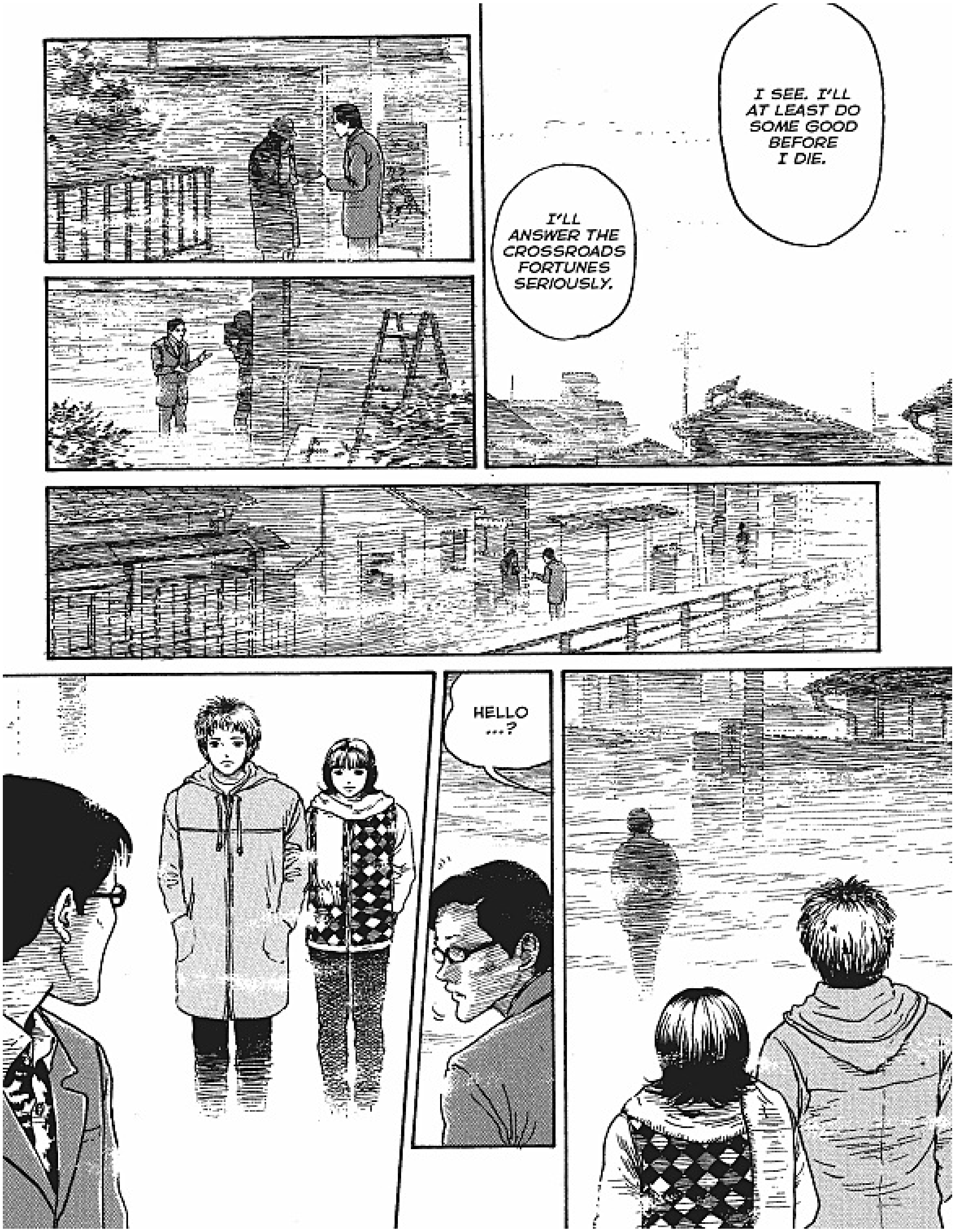

UM. EXCUSE ME?
UM. YOU THERE...
UM.
PLEASE LISTEN...
TELL MY FORTUNE...?
I WALK AND WALK, BUT IT'S NOTHING BUT CROSSROADS FORTUNES.
BUT I'M IN NO POSITION TO LISTEN TO ANYONE ELSE'S PROBLEMS.
I CAN'T KEEP DOING THIS FOREVER.
I HAVE TO MAKE A DECISION.
BUT...A COWARD LIKE ME... I'M STILL NOT SURE.
I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO...

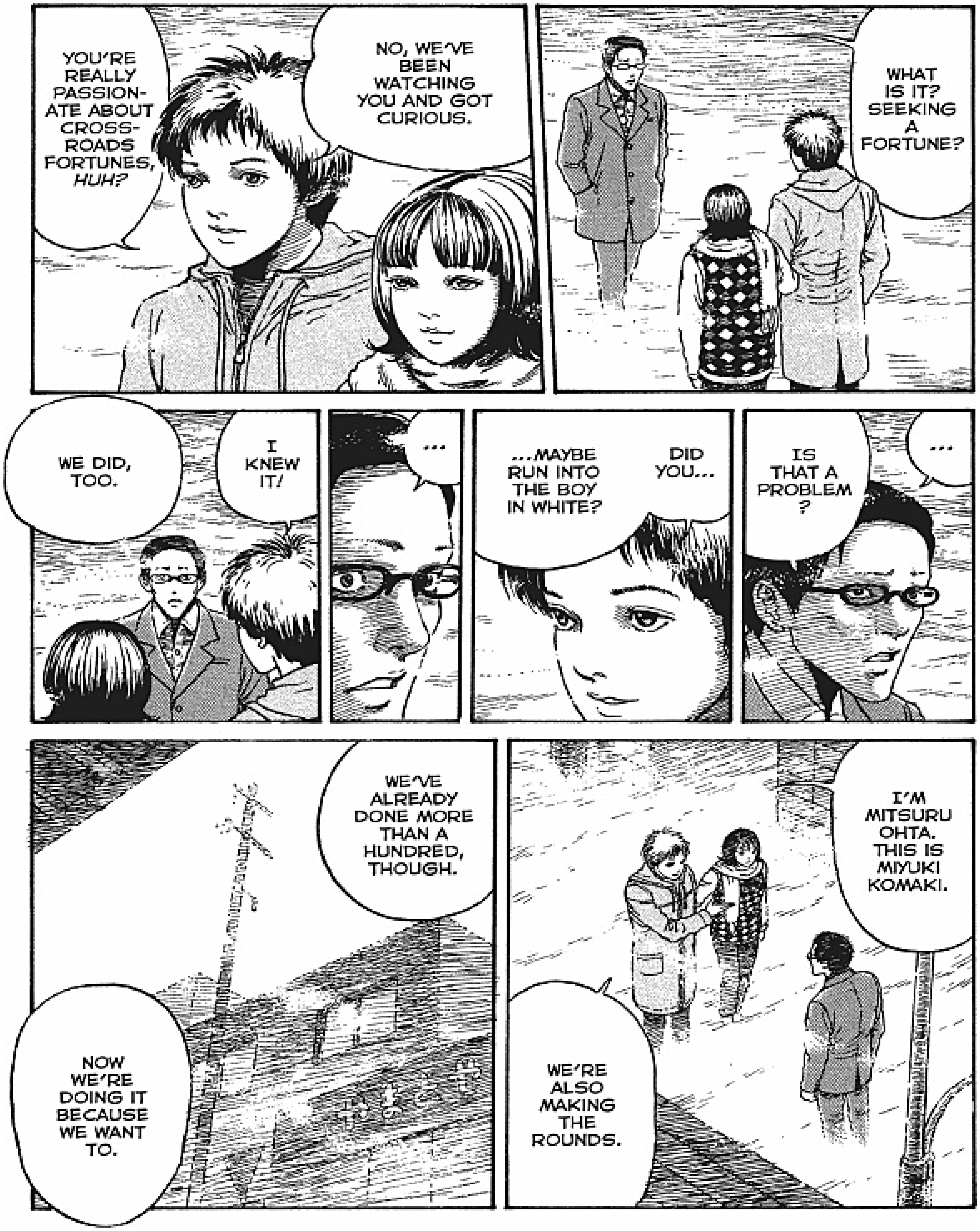

THE RIGHT CHOICE FOR A TOWN LIKE THIS!
I'LL GET SOMEONE TO TELL MY FORTUNE. A GOOD IDEA IF I DO SAY SO MYSELF.
RIGHT ...
A CROSSROADS FORTUNE.
STAND AT AN INTERSECTION ...
...AND MAKE A DECISION BASED ON THE WORDS OF THE FIRST PERSON TO COME ALONG.

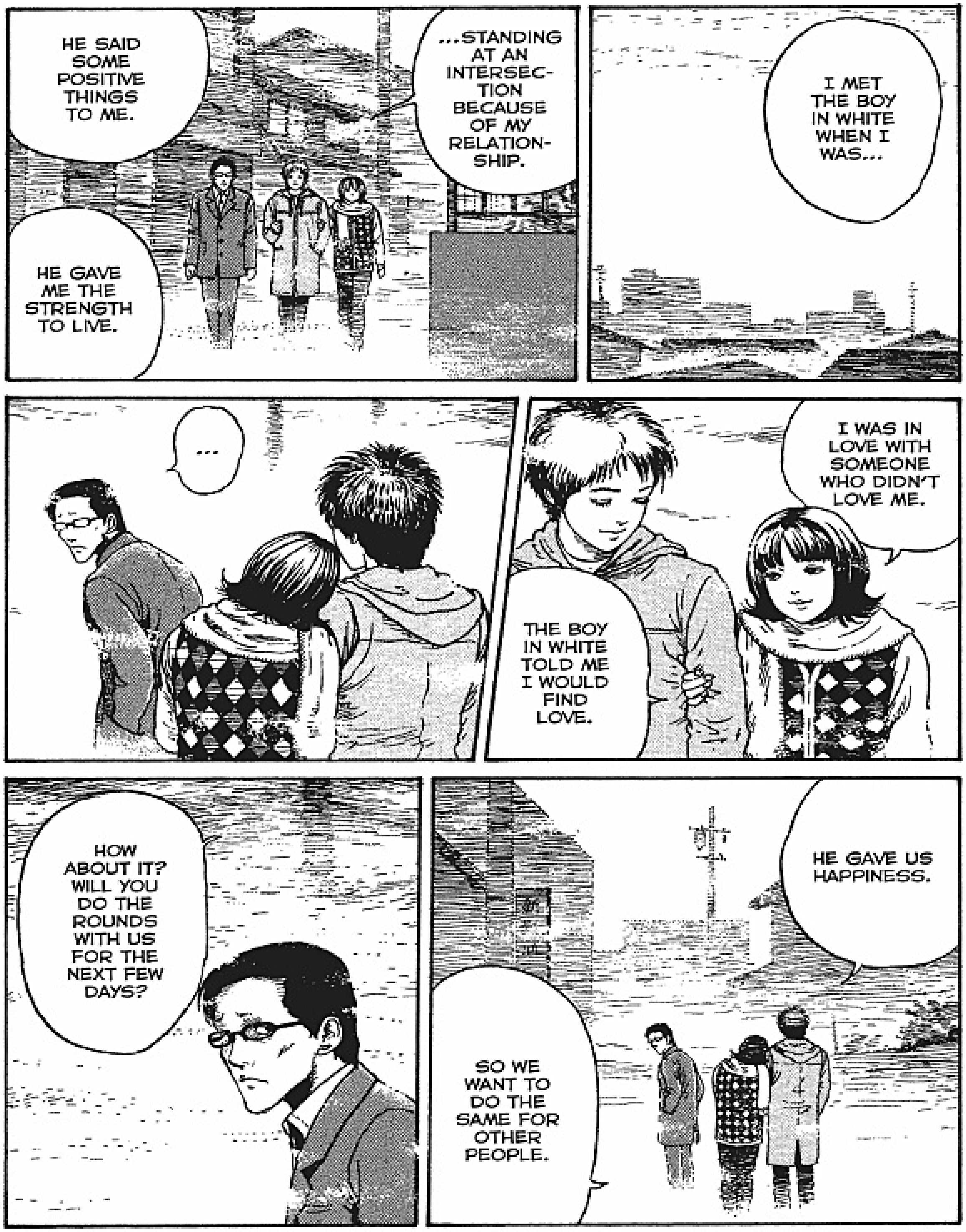

UH...
UM.

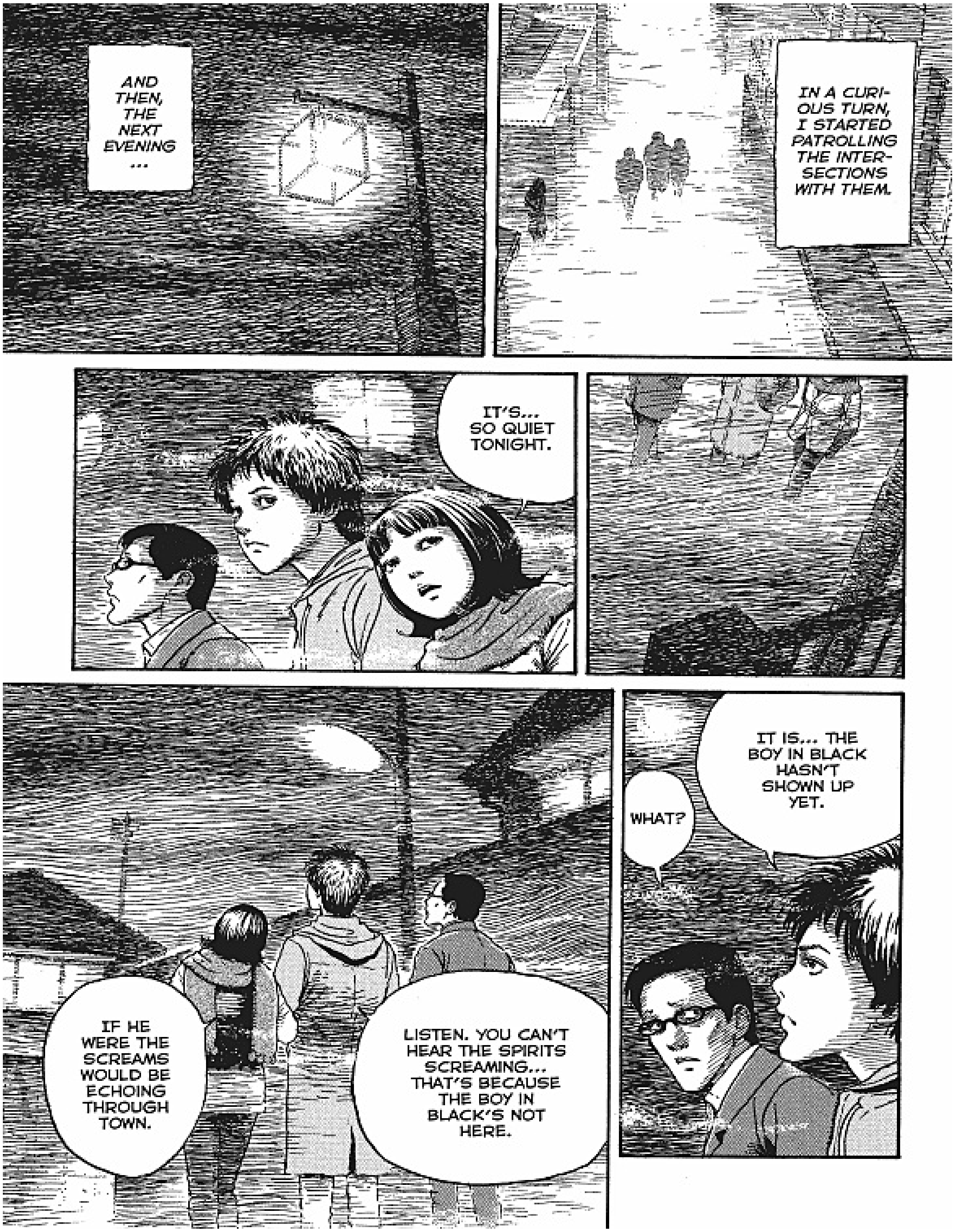

I'M... UTTERLY EXHAUSTED BY LIFE.
I'D LIKE TO BE AT PEACE NOW.
PLEASE TELL ME AN EASY WAY TO DIE.
...
YOU WANT TO BE AT PEACE?
I DO...
THEN GO AROUND THE INTERSECTIONS AND ANSWER A HUNDRED TIMES.
IF YOU DO, THE FOG WILL CLEAR.
...

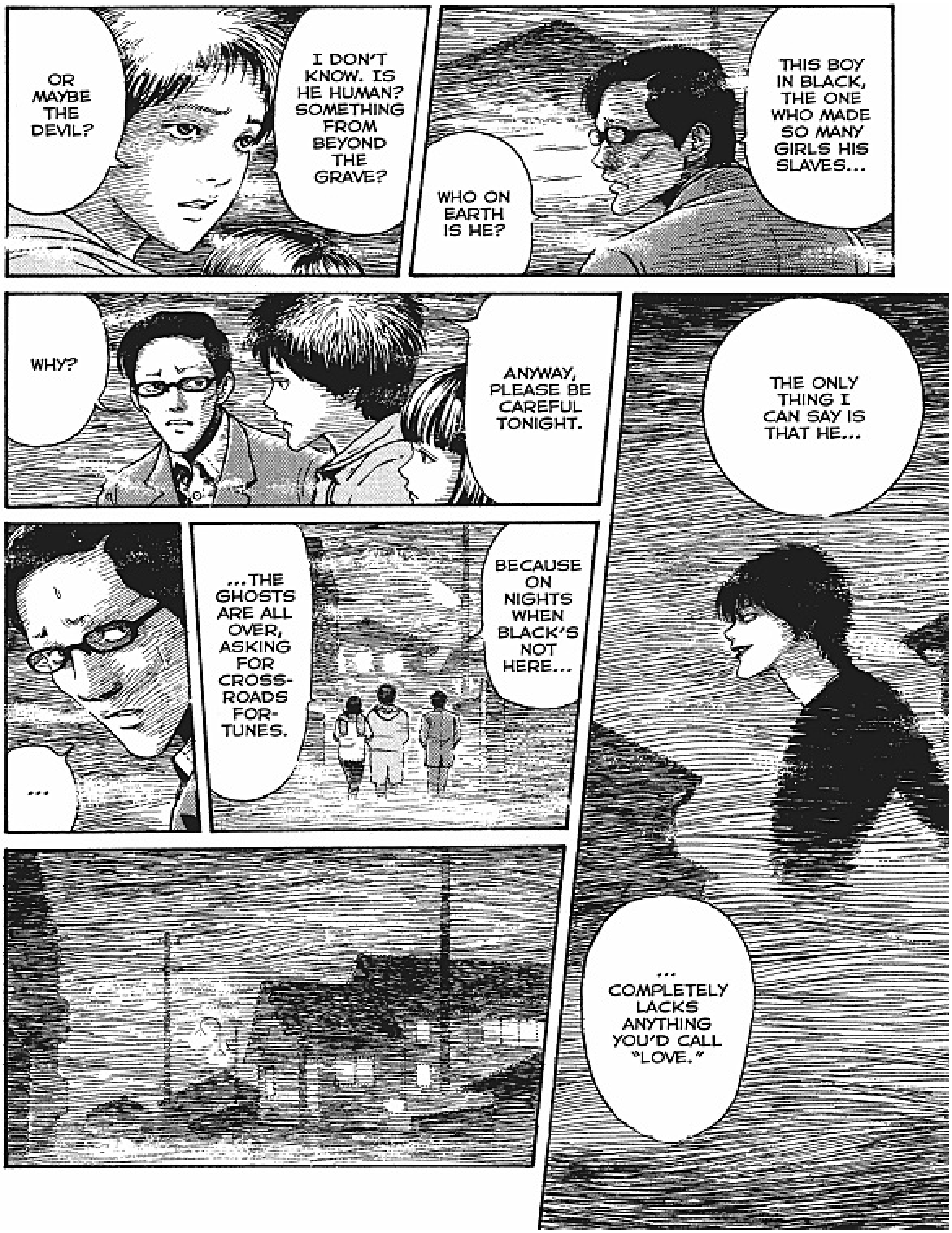

WHO WAS THAT BOY...?
GO AROUND THE INTERSECTIONS AND ANSWER A HUNDRED TIMES?
SO HE MEANS GO AND TELL A HUNDRED CROSSROADS FORTUNES?
BUT I ASKED HIM TO TELL ME HOW TO DIE... THIS IS RIDICULOUS!
HE WAS A STRANGE BOY... ALL IN WHITE.
AND I FELT HE HAD THE CURIOUS POWER TO CALM A PERSON'S HEART.
WELL, I'M IN NO HURRY.
I CAN JUST AS WELL DIE AFTER DOING THIS.
EXCUSE ME?

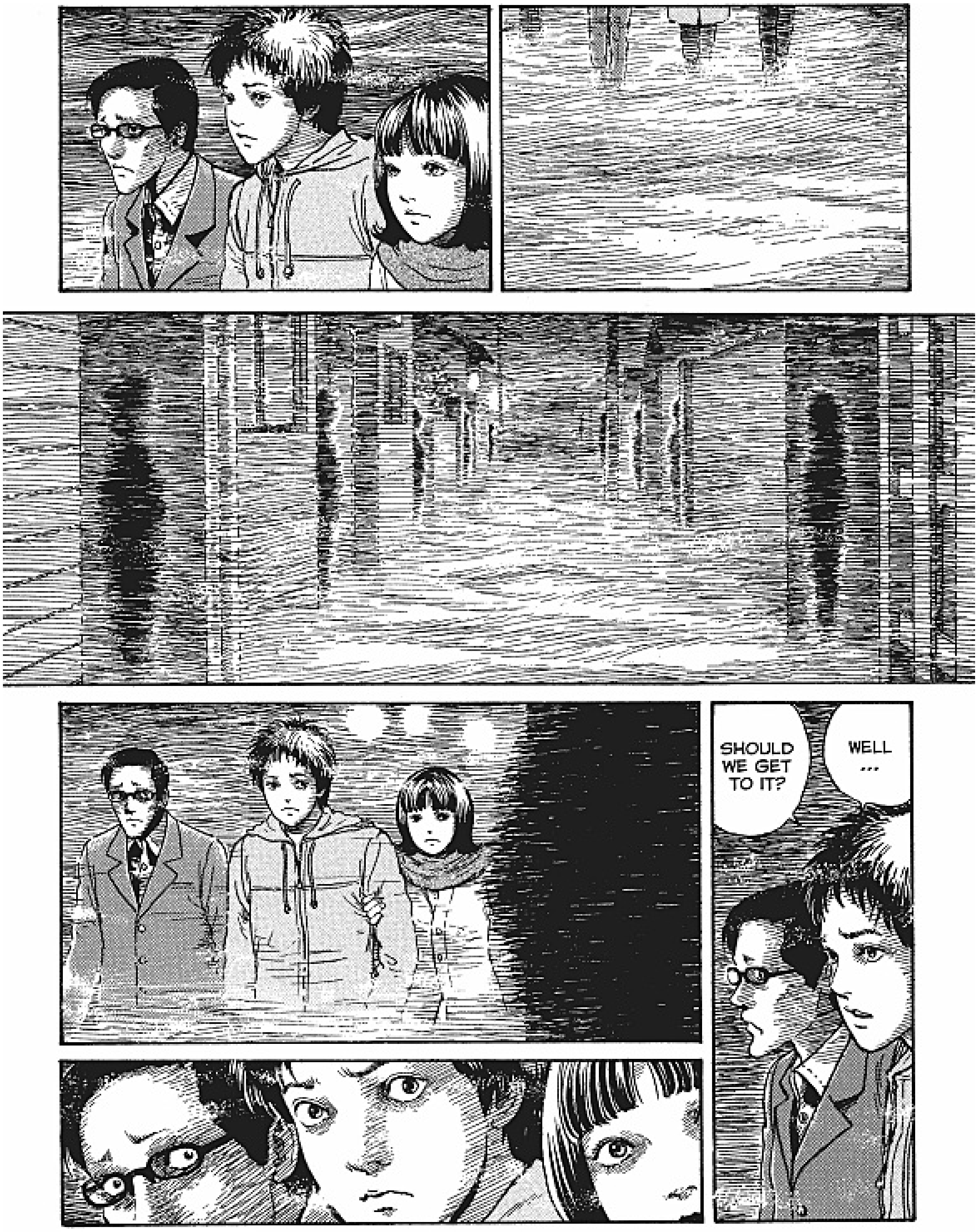

I SEE. I'LL AT LEAST DO SOME GOOD BEFORE I DIE.
I'LL ANSWER THE CROSSROADS FORTUNES SERIOUSLY.
HELLO ...?

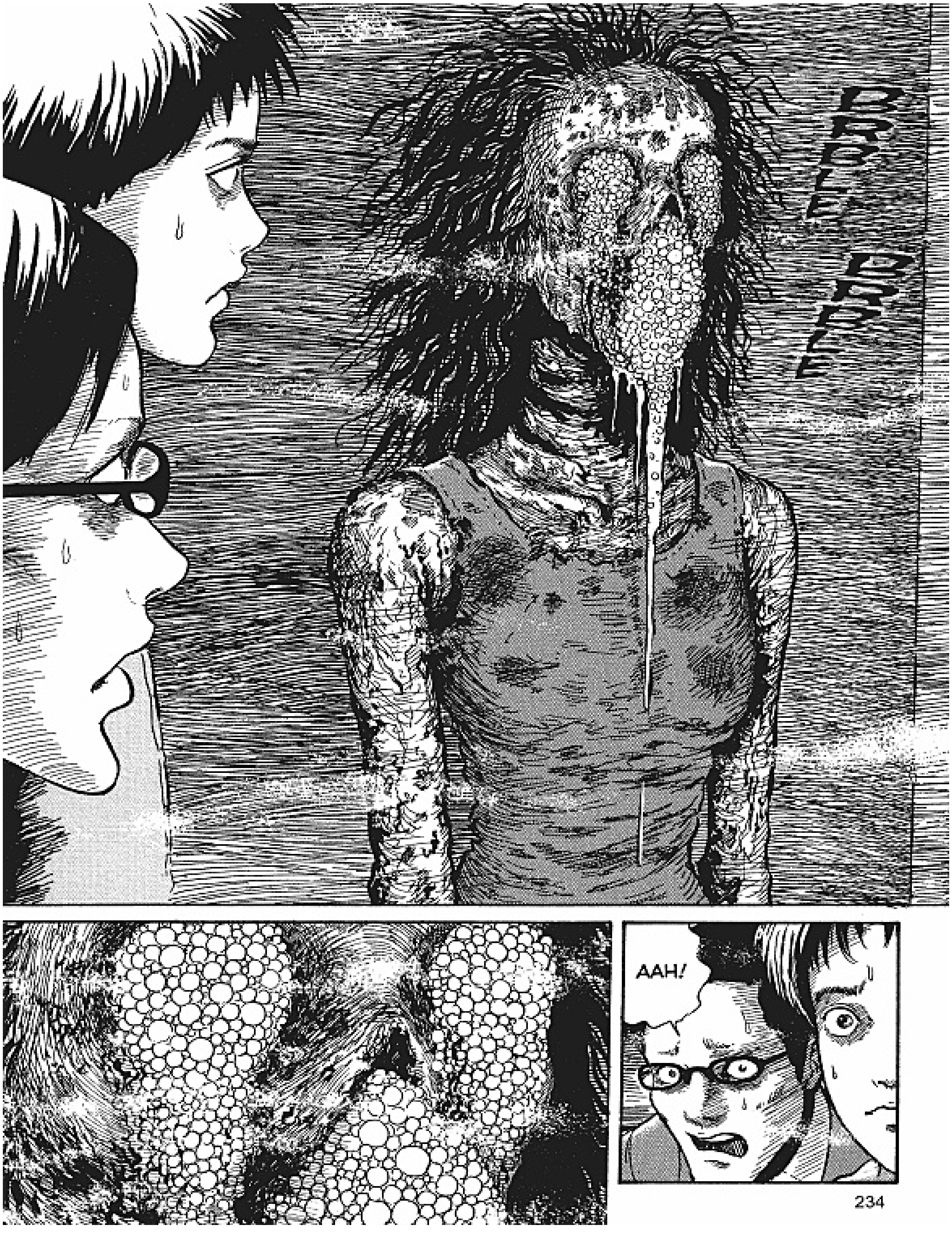

WHAT IS IT? SEEKING A FORTUNE?
NO, WE'VE BEEN WATCHING YOU AND GOT CURIOUS.
YOU'RE REALLY PASSIONATE ABOUT CROSSROADS FORTUNES, *HUH?*
...
IS THAT A PROBLEM?
DID YOU...
...MAYBE RUN INTO THE BOY IN WHITE?
...
I KNEW IT!
WE DID, TOO.
I'M MITSURU OHTA. THIS IS MIYUKI KOMAKI.
WE'RE ALSO MAKING THE ROUNDS.
WE'VE ALREADY DONE MORE THAN A HUNDRED, THOUGH.
NOW WE'RE DOING IT BECAUSE WE WANT TO.

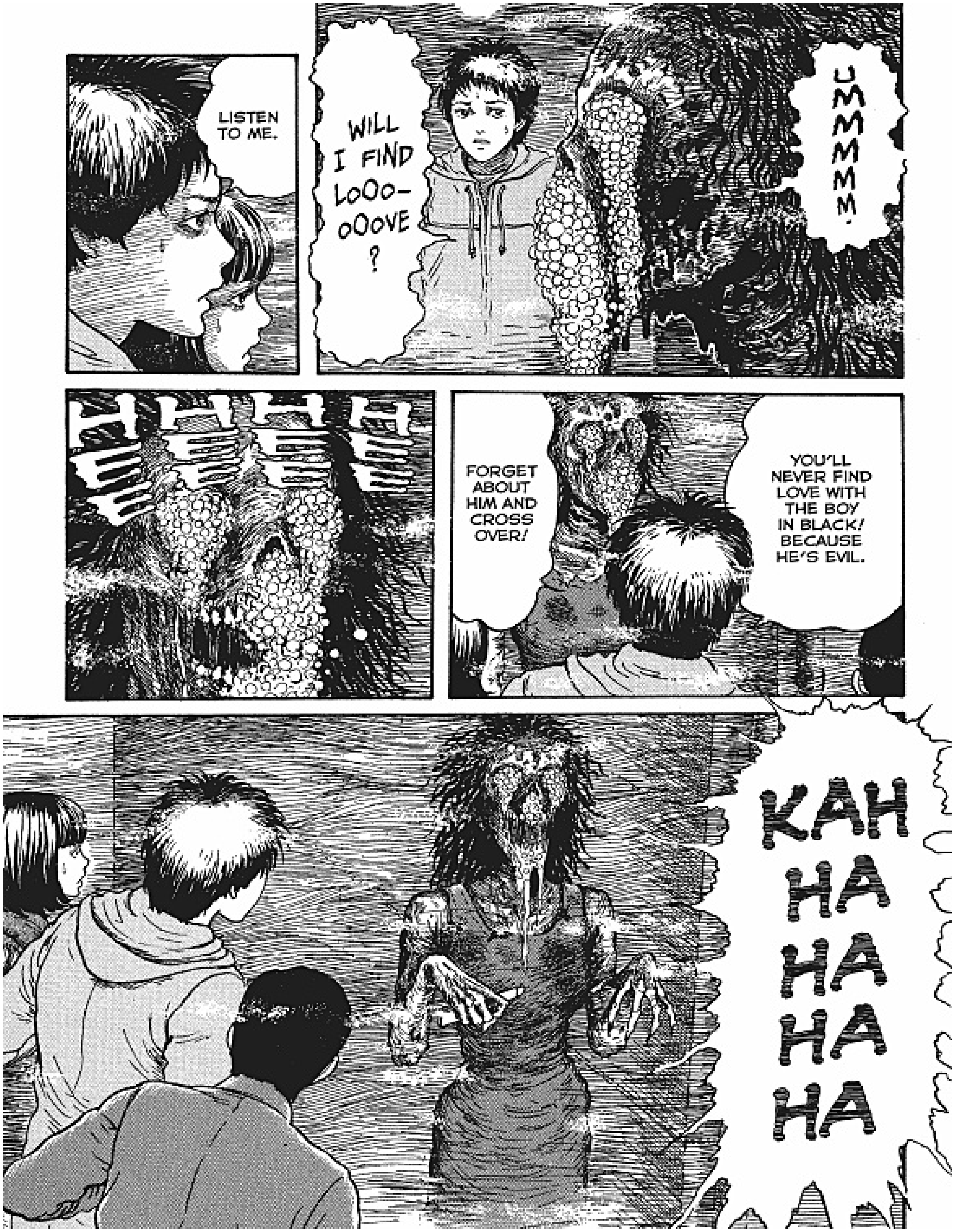

I MET THE BOY IN WHITE WHEN I WAS...
...STANDING AT AN INTERSECTION BECAUSE OF MY RELATIONSHIP.
HE SAID SOME POSITIVE THINGS TO ME.
HE GAVE ME THE STRENGTH TO LIVE.
I WAS IN LOVE WITH SOMEONE WHO DIDN'T LOVE ME.
THE BOY IN WHITE TOLD ME I WOULD FIND LOVE.
...
HE GAVE US HAPPINESS.
SO WE WANT TO DO THE SAME FOR OTHER PEOPLE.
HOW ABOUT IT? WILL YOU DO THE ROUNDS WITH US FOR THE NEXT FEW DAYS?

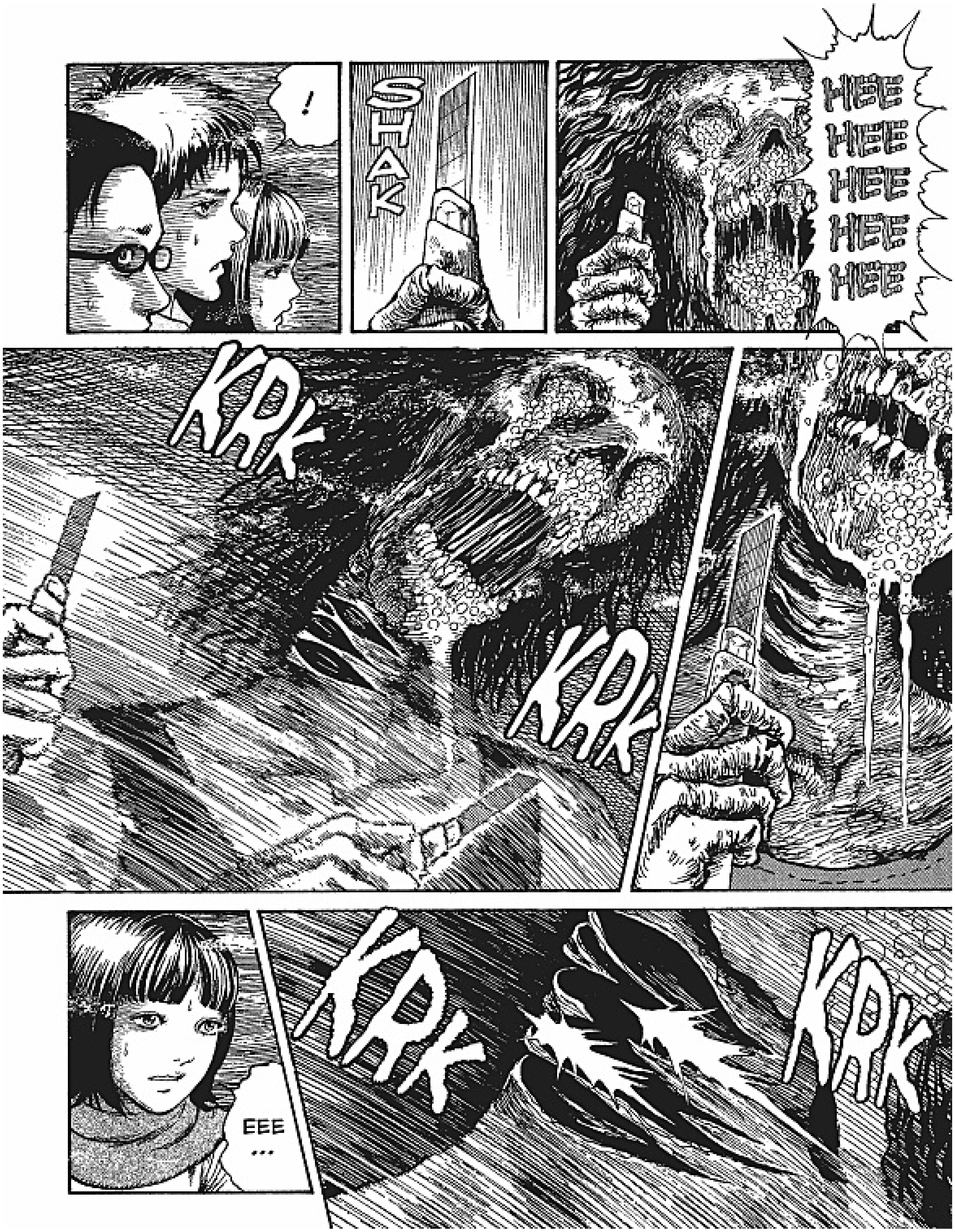

IN A CURIOUS TURN, I STARTED PATROLLING THE INTERSECTIONS WITH THEM.
AND THEN, THE NEXT EVENING ...
IT'S... SO QUIET TONIGHT.
IT IS... THE BOY IN BLACK HASN'T SHOWN UP YET.
WHAT?
LISTEN. YOU CAN'T HEAR THE SPIRITS SCREAMING... THAT'S BECAUSE THE BOY IN BLACK'S NOT HERE.
IF HE WERE THE SCREAMS WOULD BE ECHOING THROUGH TOWN.

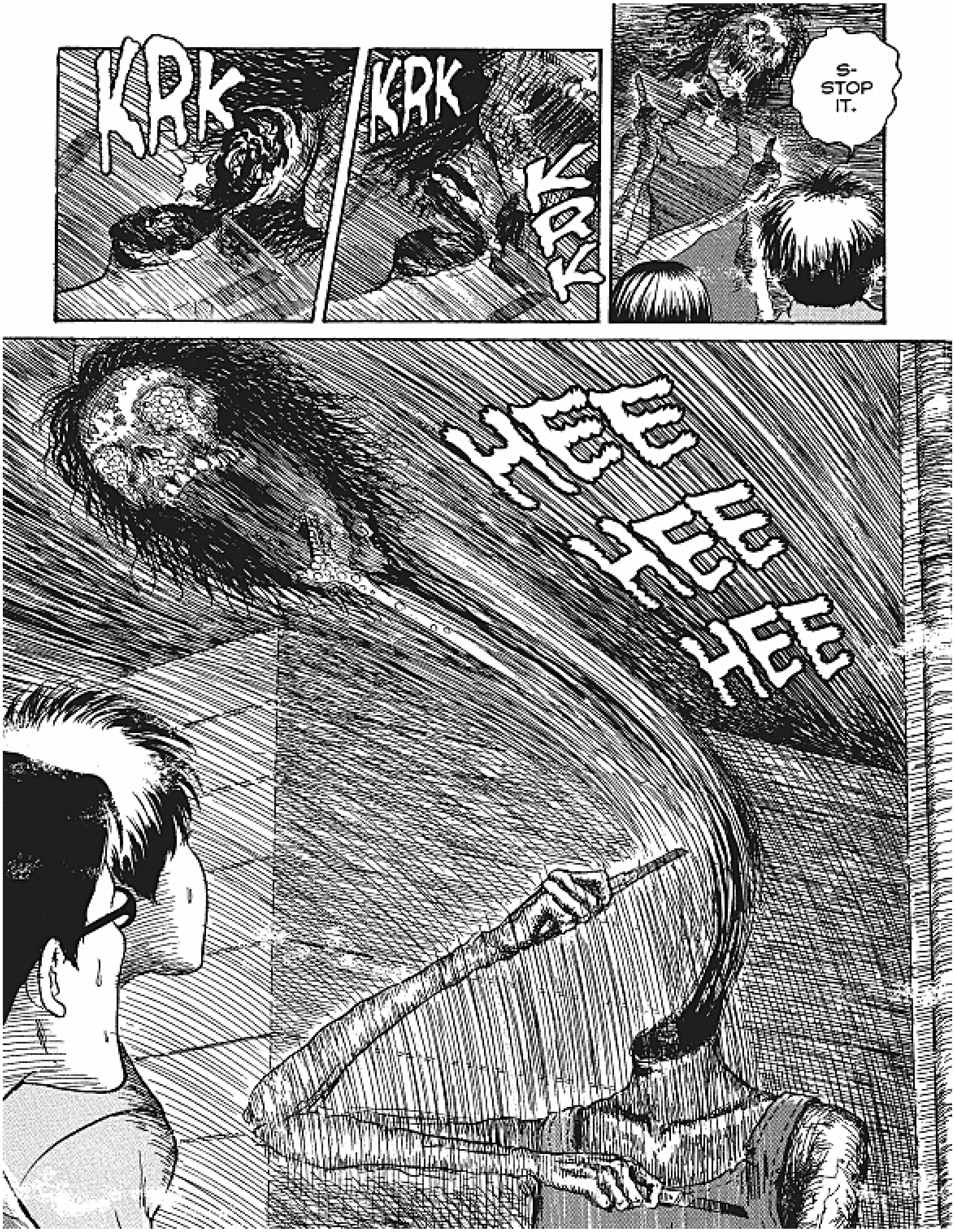

THIS BOY IN BLACK, THE ONE WHO MADE SO MANY GIRLS HIS SLAVES...
WHO ON EARTH IS HE?
I DON'T KNOW. IS HE HUMAN? SOMETHING FROM BEYOND THE GRAVE?
OR MAYBE THE DEVIL?
THE ONLY THING I CAN SAY IS THAT HE...
...COMPLETELY LACKS ANYTHING YOU'D CALL "LOVE."
ANYWAY, PLEASE BE CAREFUL TONIGHT.
WHY?
BECAUSE ON NIGHTS WHEN BLACK'S NOT HERE...
...THE GHOSTS ARE ALL OVER, ASKING FOR CROSSROADS FORTUNES.
...

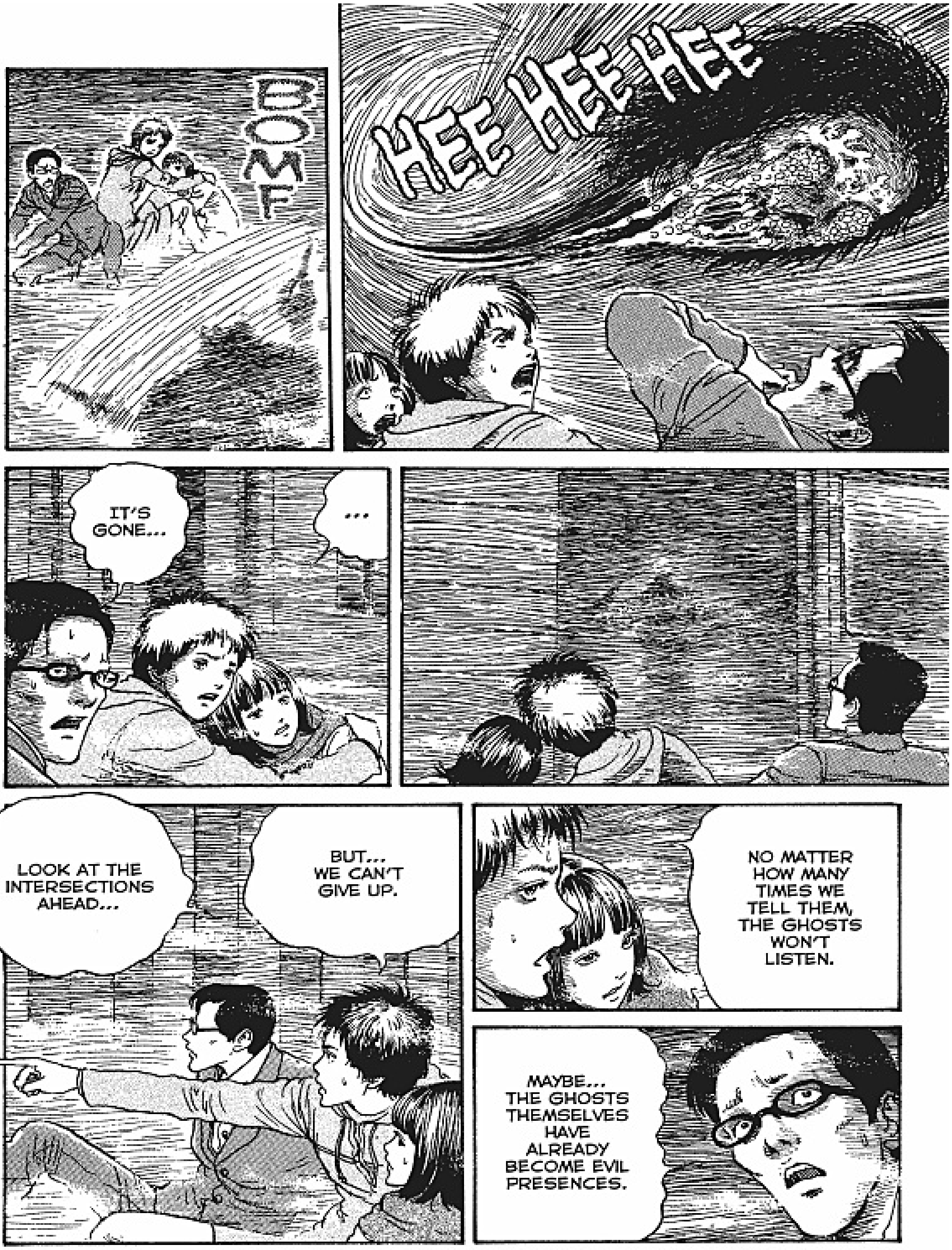

WELL ...
SHOULD WE GET TO IT?

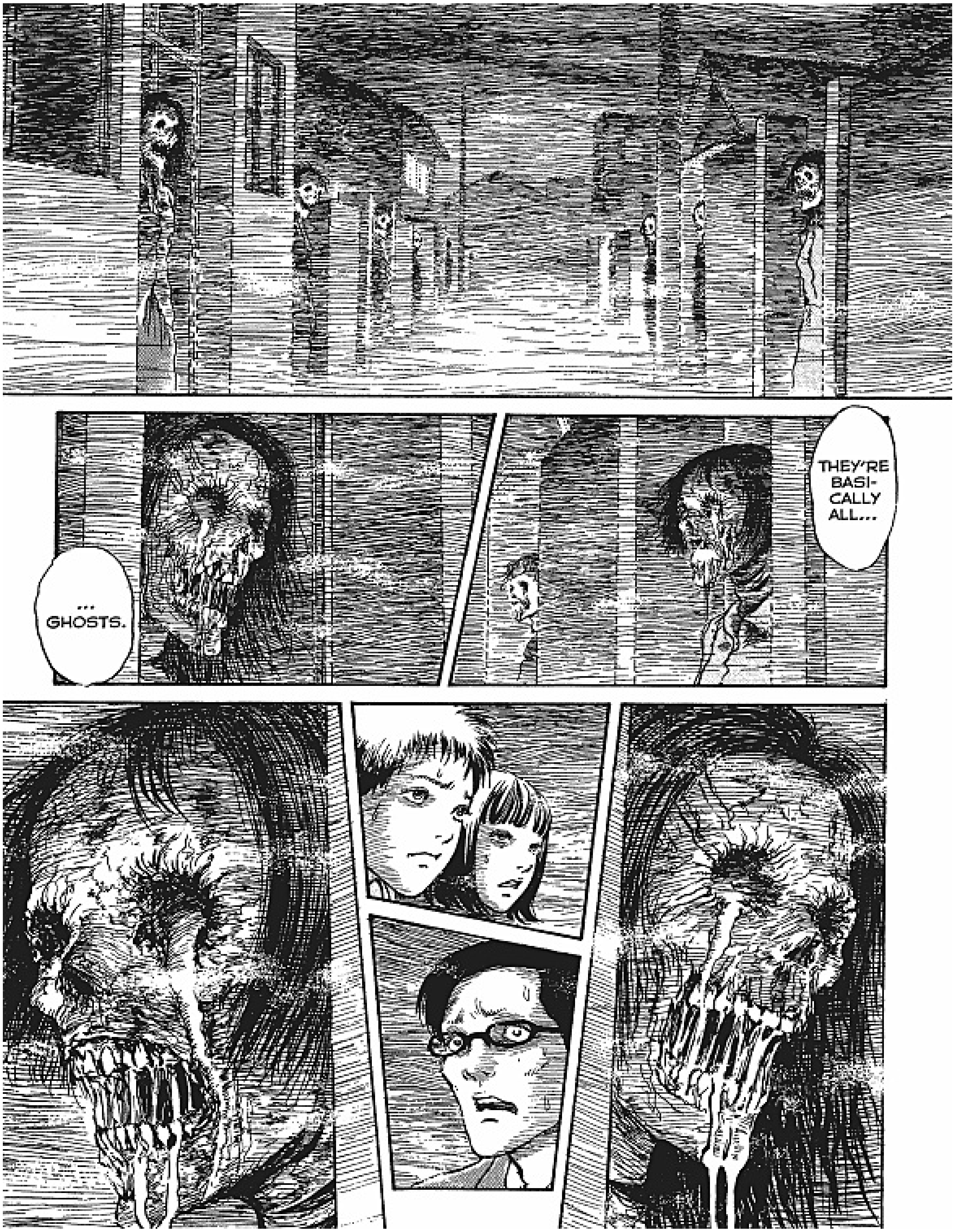

BRRLE BRRLE
AAH!

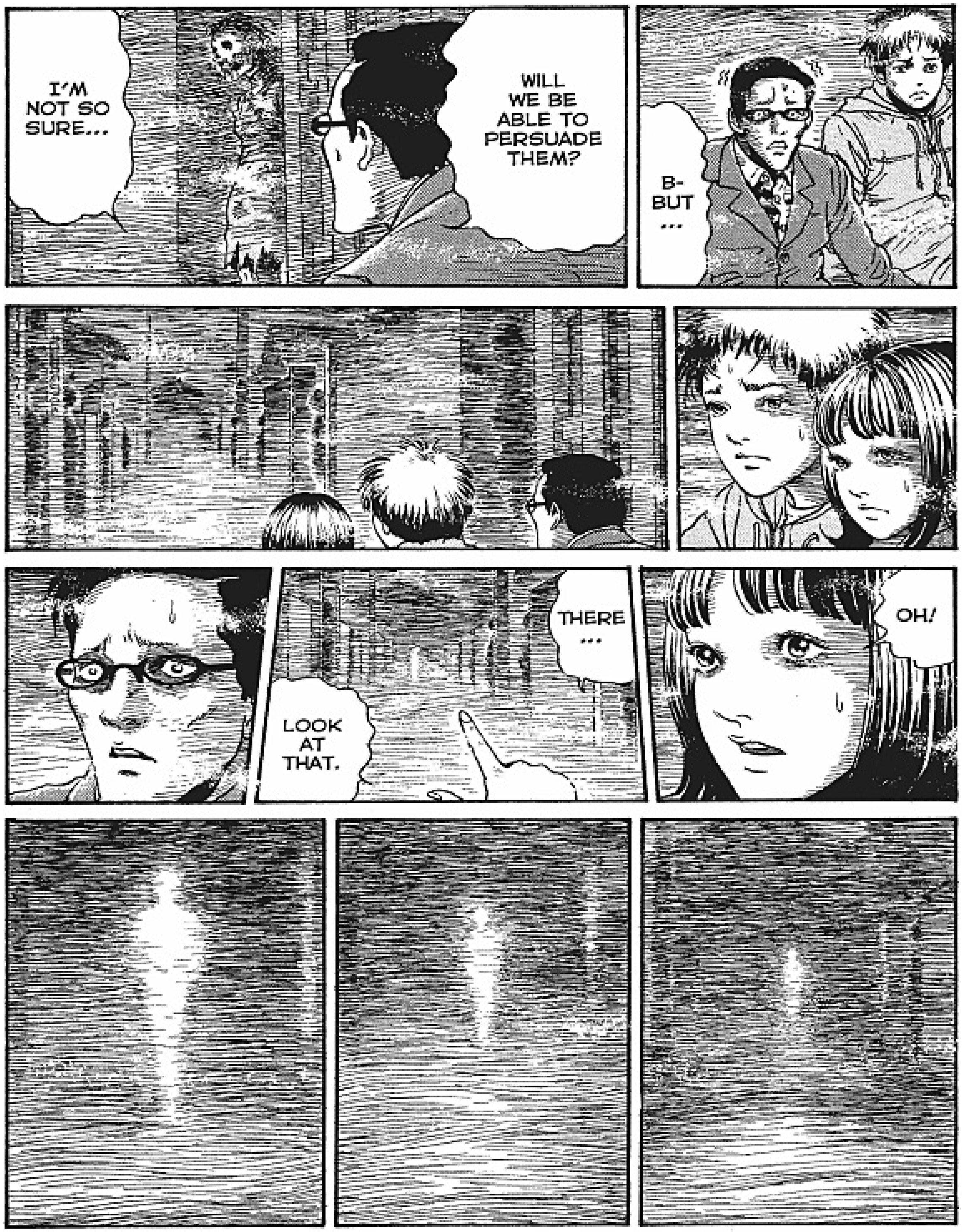

WILL I FIND LOOO-OOOVE?
UMMMMM!
LISTEN TO ME.
YOU'LL NEVER FIND LOVE WITH THE BOY IN BLACK! BECAUSE HE'S EVIL.
FORGET ABOUT HIM AND CROSS OVER!
HHHHHEEEEE
KAH HA HA HA HA HA

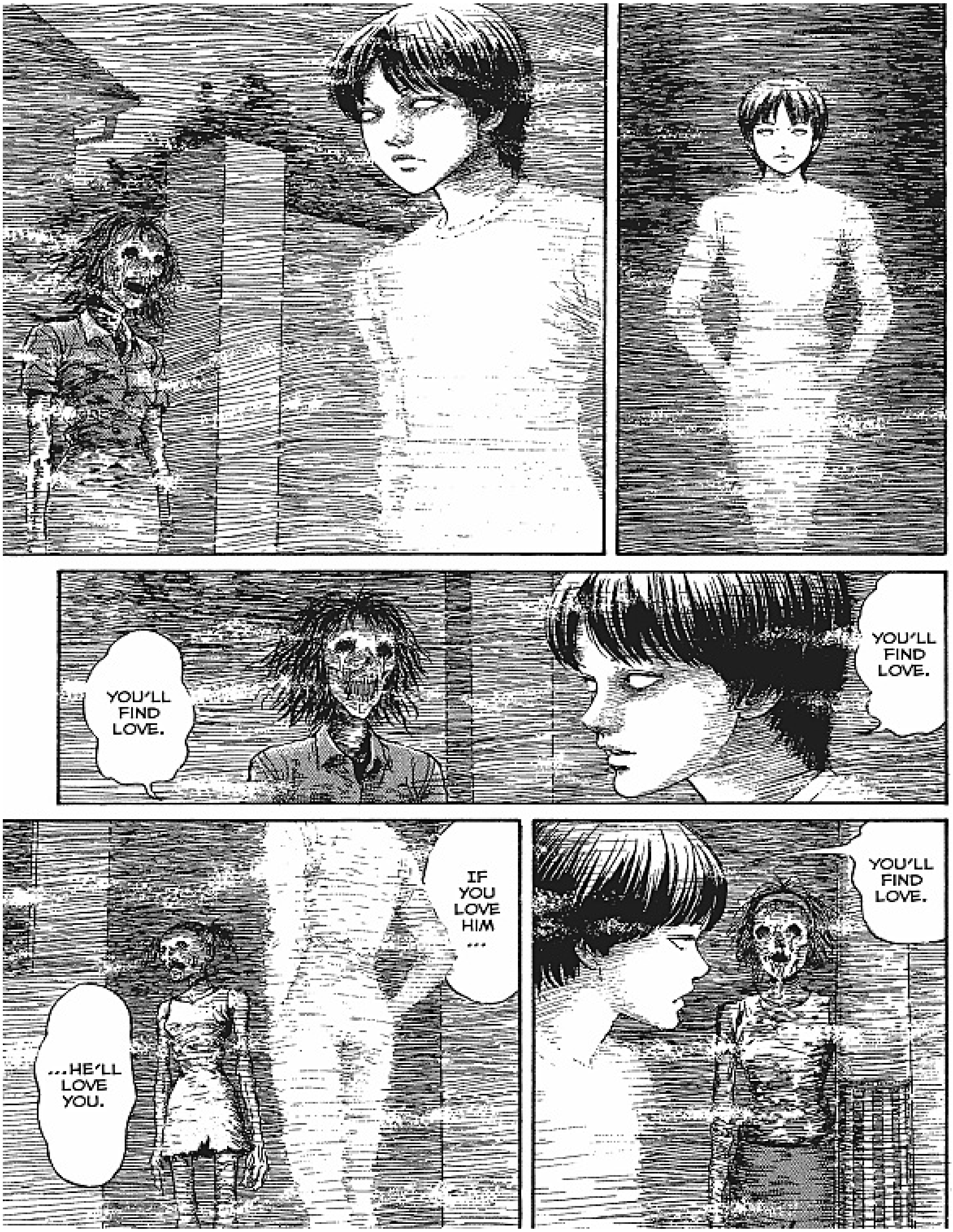

!
SHAK
HEE HEE HEE HEE HEE
KRK
KRK
KRK
EEE …
KRK

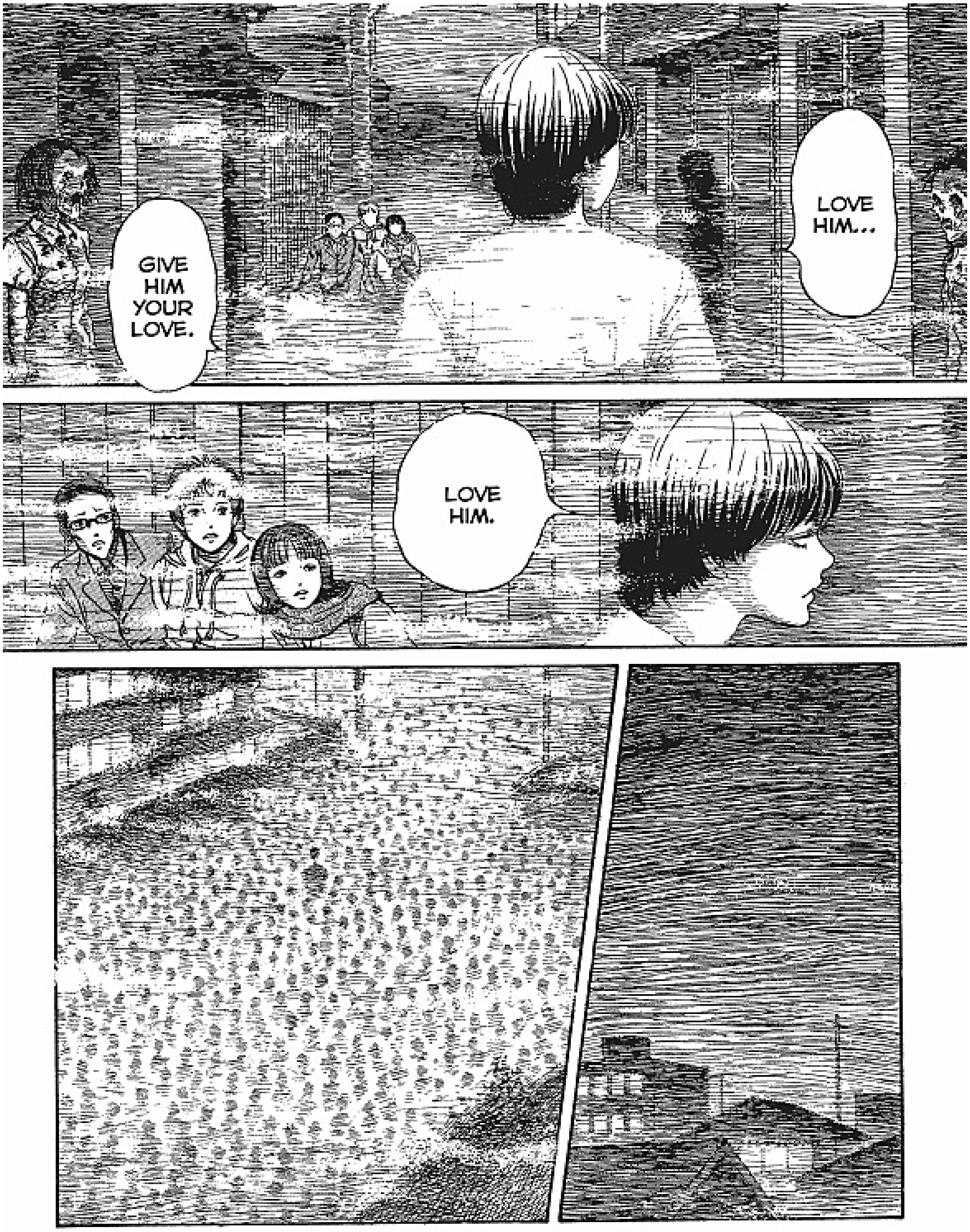

S-
STOP
IT.
KRK
KRK
KRK
HEE
HEE
HEE

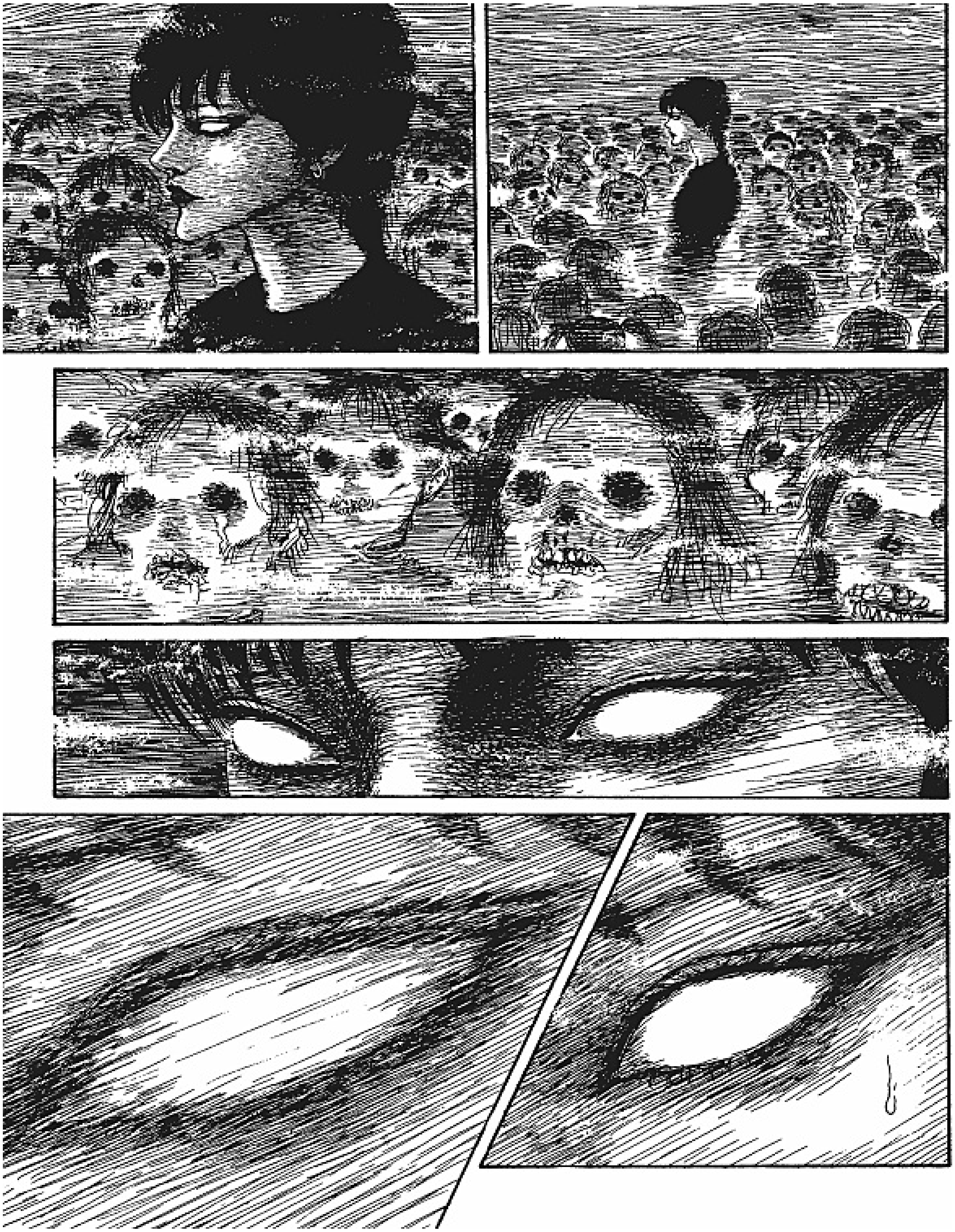

HEE HEE HEE
BOMF
...
IT'S GONE...
NO MATTER HOW MANY TIMES WE TELL THEM, THE GHOSTS WON'T LISTEN.
MAYBE... THE GHOSTS THEMSELVES HAVE ALREADY BECOME EVIL PRESENCES.
BUT... WE CAN'T GIVE UP.
LOOK AT THE INTERSECTIONS AHEAD...

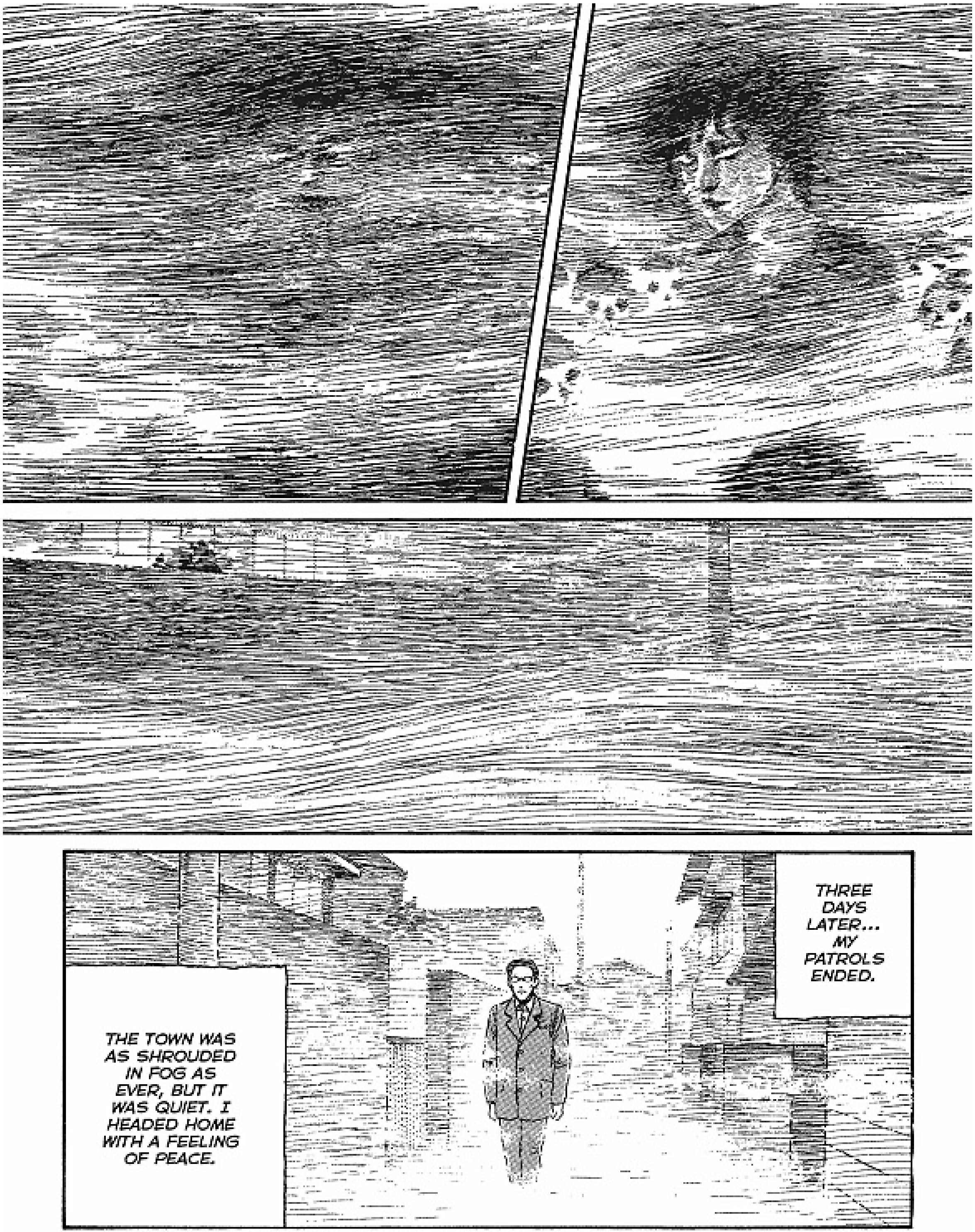

THEY'RE BASICALLY ALL...
... GHOSTS.


WILL WE BE ABLE TO PERSUADE THEM?
I'M NOT SO SURE...
B-BUT ...
OH!
THERE ...
LOOK AT THAT.

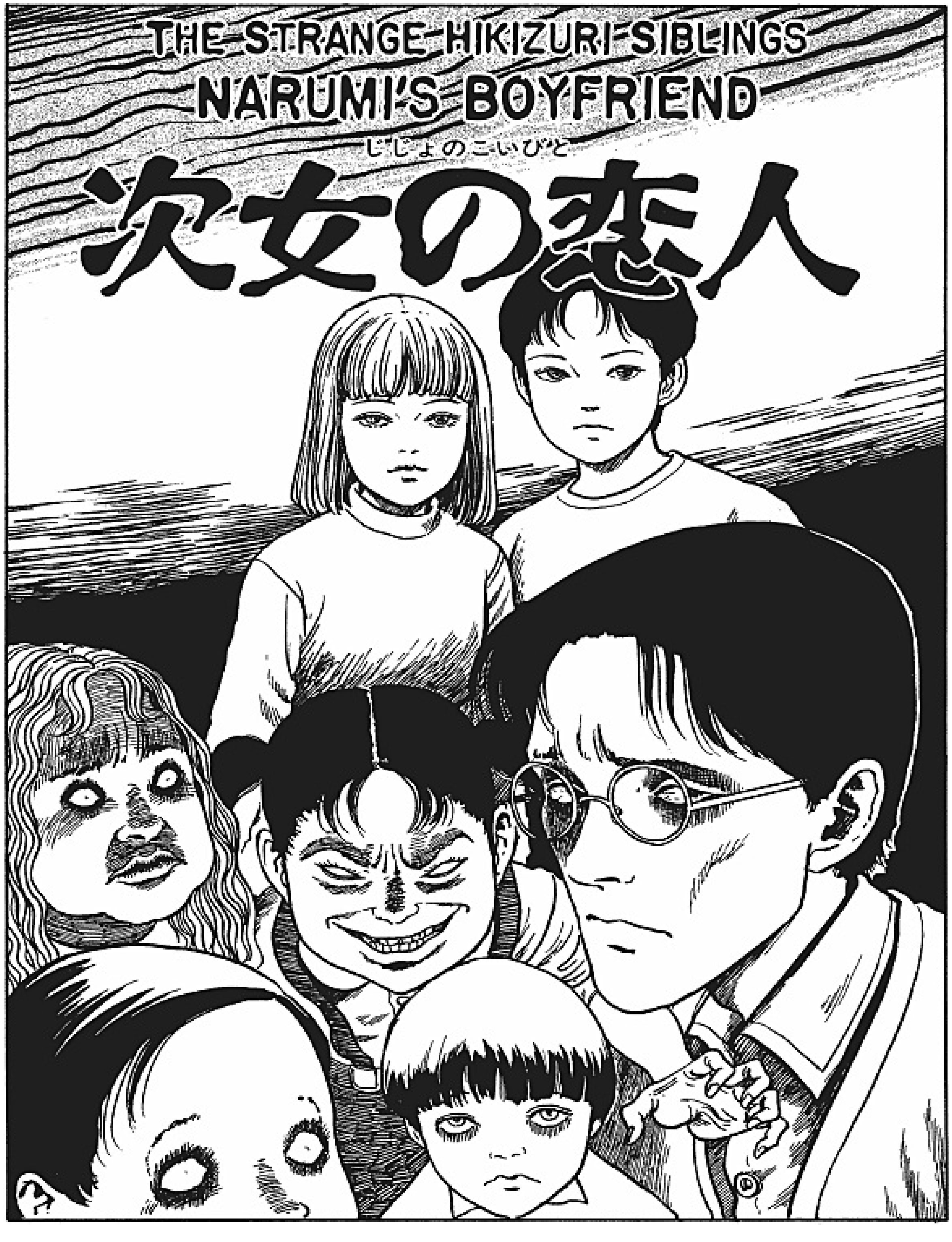

YOU'LL FIND LOVE.
YOU'LL FIND LOVE.
YOU'LL FIND LOVE.
IF YOU LOVE HIM...
...HE'LL LOVE YOU.

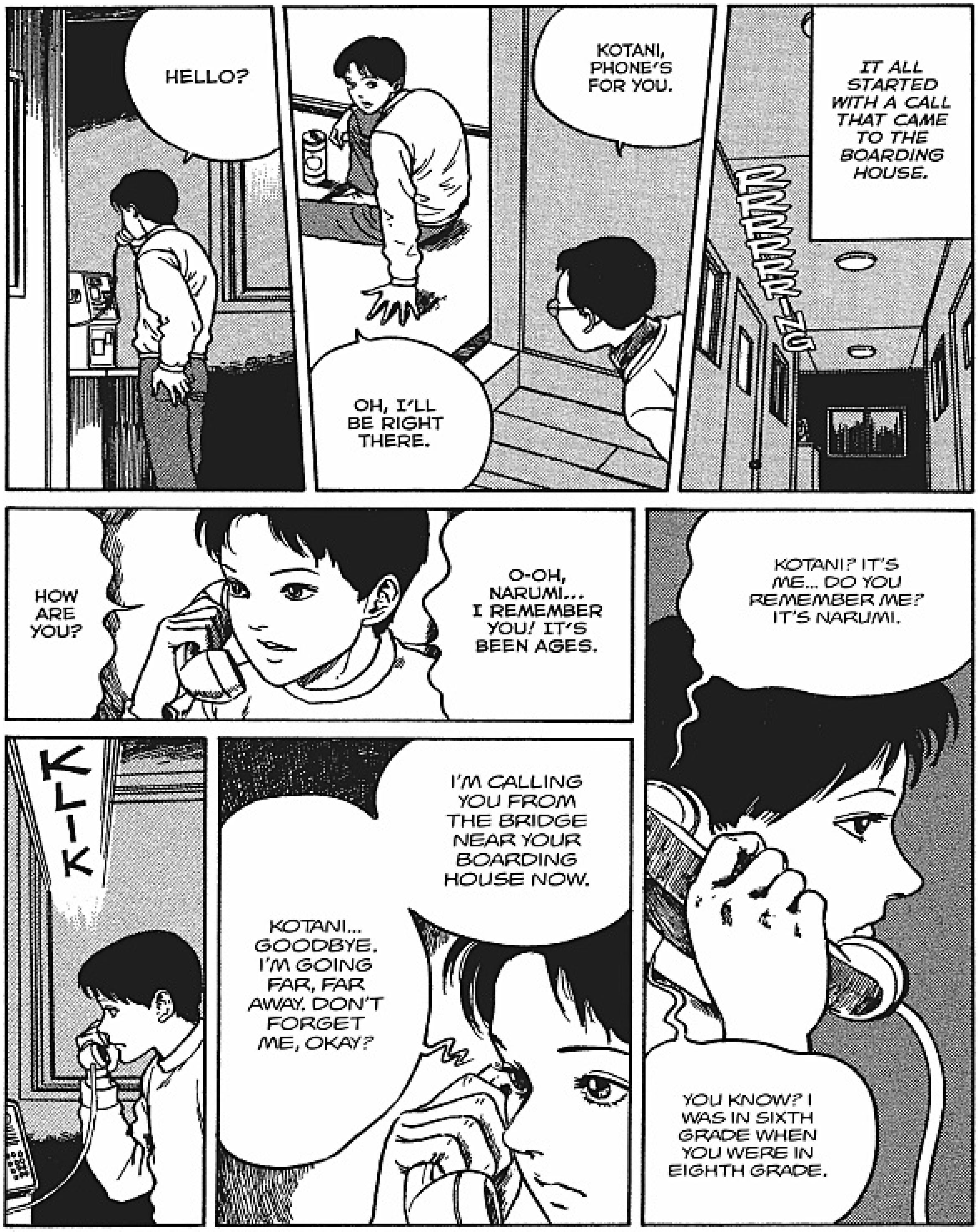

LOVE HIM...
GIVE HIM YOUR LOVE.
LOVE HIM.

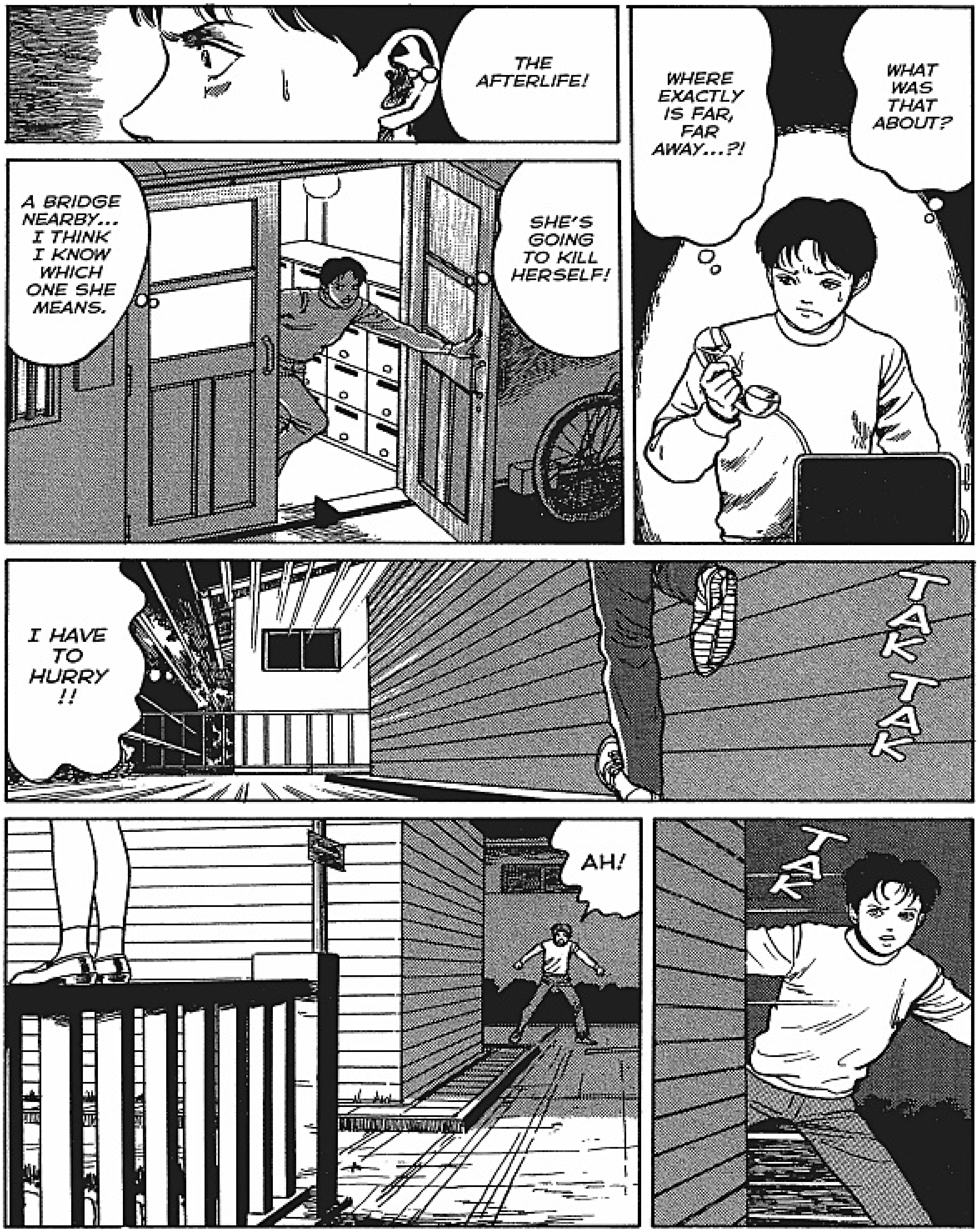


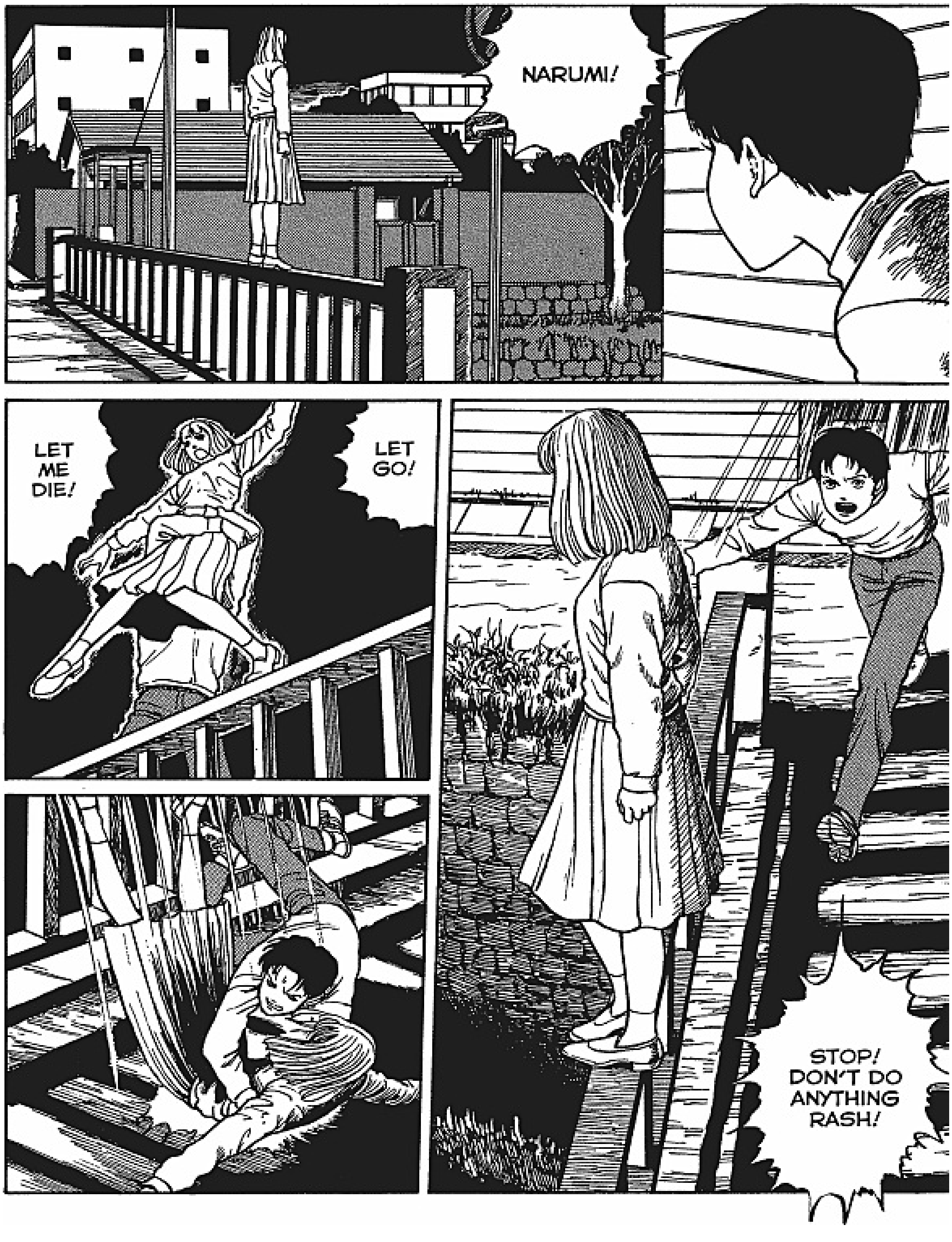

THREE DAYS LATER... MY PATROLS ENDED.
THE TOWN WAS AS SHROUDED IN FOG AS EVER, BUT IT WAS QUIET. I HEADED HOME WITH A FEELING OF PEACE.

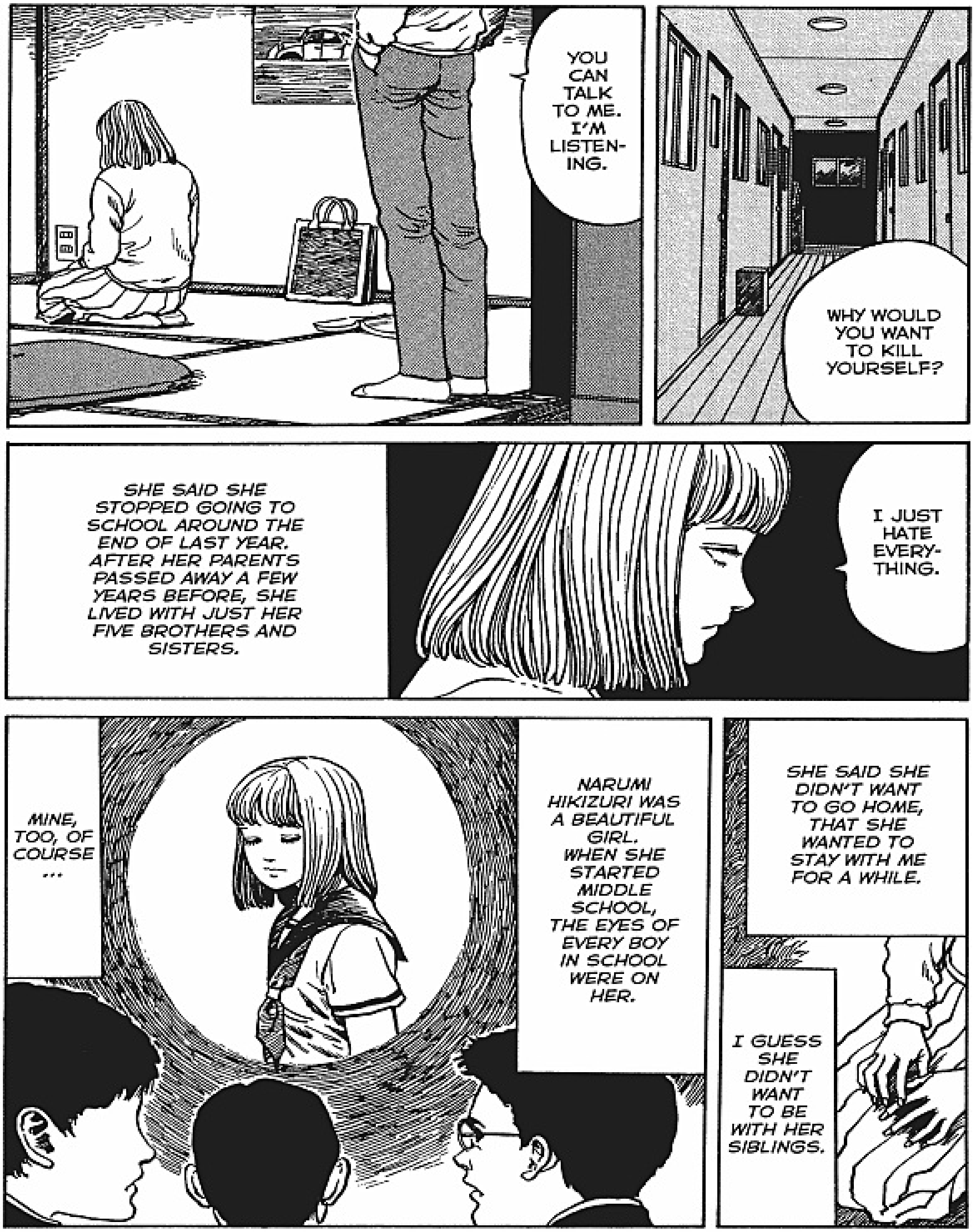
THE BOY IN WHITE/END

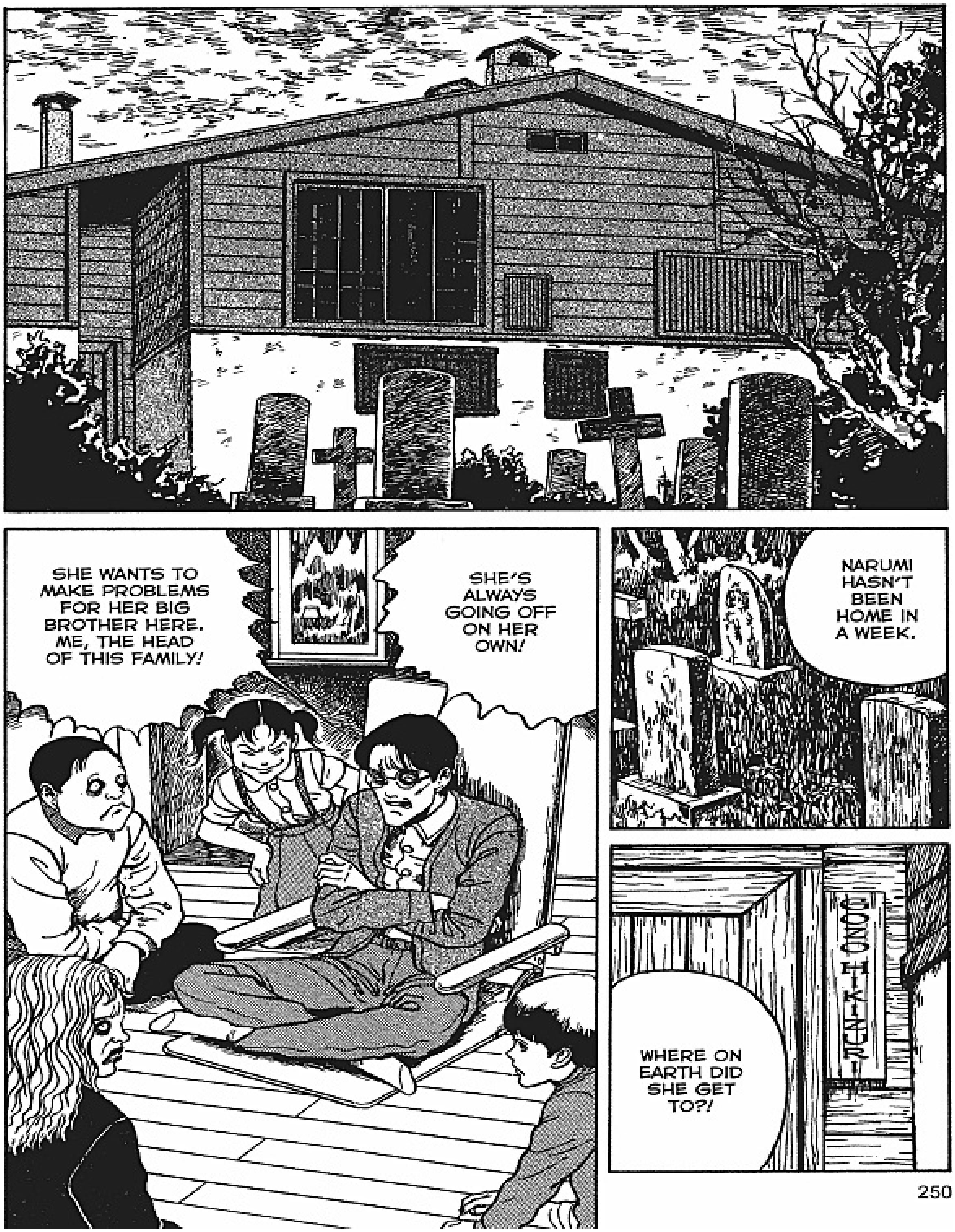

THE STRANGE HIKIZURI SIBLINGS
NARUMI'S BOYFRIEND
じじょのこいびと
次女の恋人

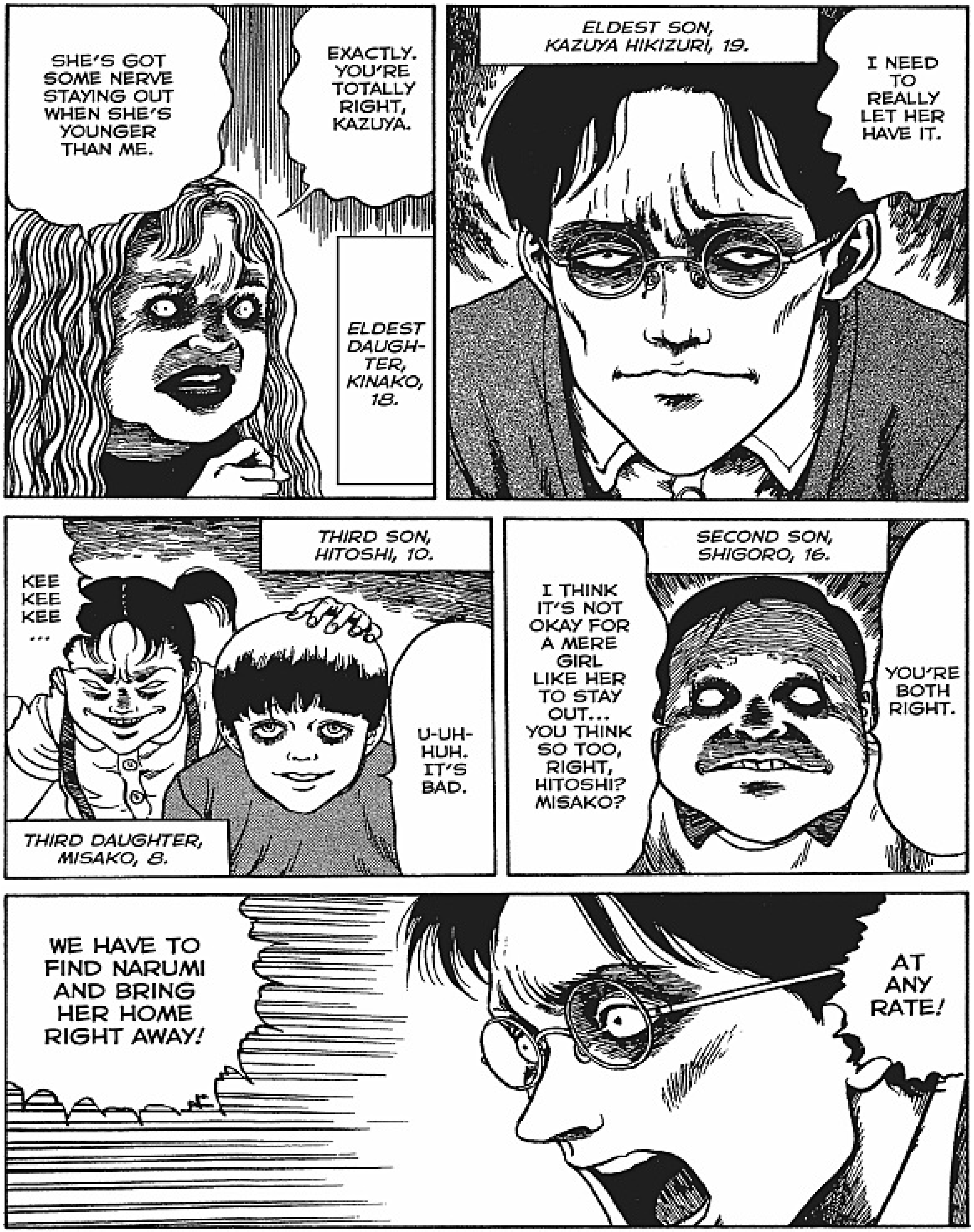

IT ALL STARTED WITH A CALL THAT CAME TO THE BOARDING HOUSE.
RRRRRRRR-ZU
KOTANI, PHONE'S FOR YOU.
OH, I'LL BE RIGHT THERE.
HELLO?
KOTANI? IT'S ME... DO YOU REMEMBER ME? IT'S NARUMI.
O-OH, NARUMI... I REMEMBER YOU! IT'S BEEN AGES.
HOW ARE YOU?
YOU KNOW? I WAS IN SIXTH GRADE WHEN YOU WERE IN EIGHTH GRADE.
I'M CALLING YOU FROM THE BRIDGE NEAR YOUR BOARDING HOUSE NOW.
KOTANI... GOODBYE. I'M GOING FAR, FAR AWAY. DON'T FORGET ME, OKAY?
KLIK

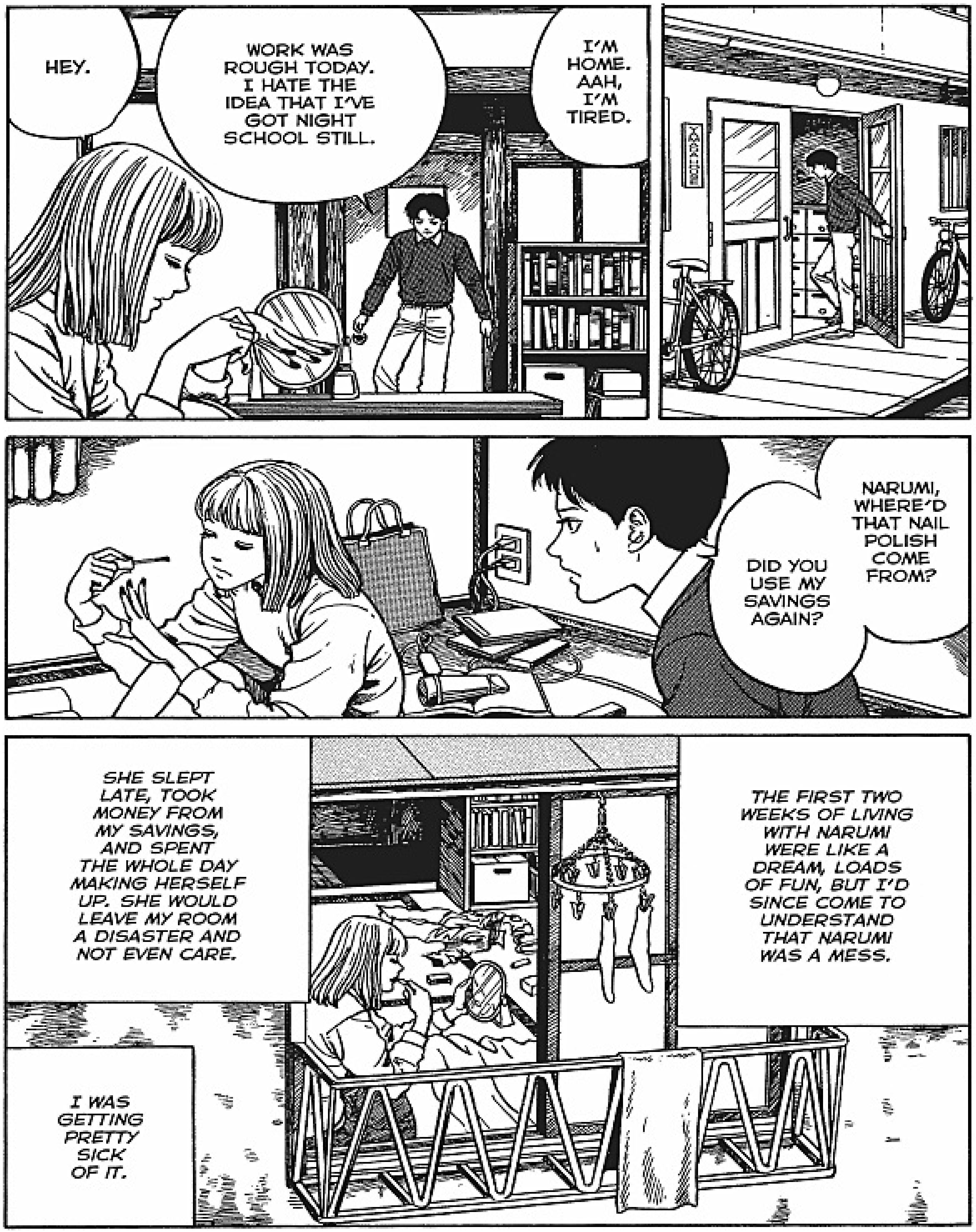

THE AFTERLIFE!
WHAT WAS THAT ABOUT?
WHERE EXACTLY IS FAR, FAR AWAY...?!
SHE'S GOING TO KILL HERSELF!
A BRIDGE NEARBY... I THINK I KNOW WHICH ONE SHE MEANS.
I HAVE TO HURRY!!
TAK TAK
AH!
TAK

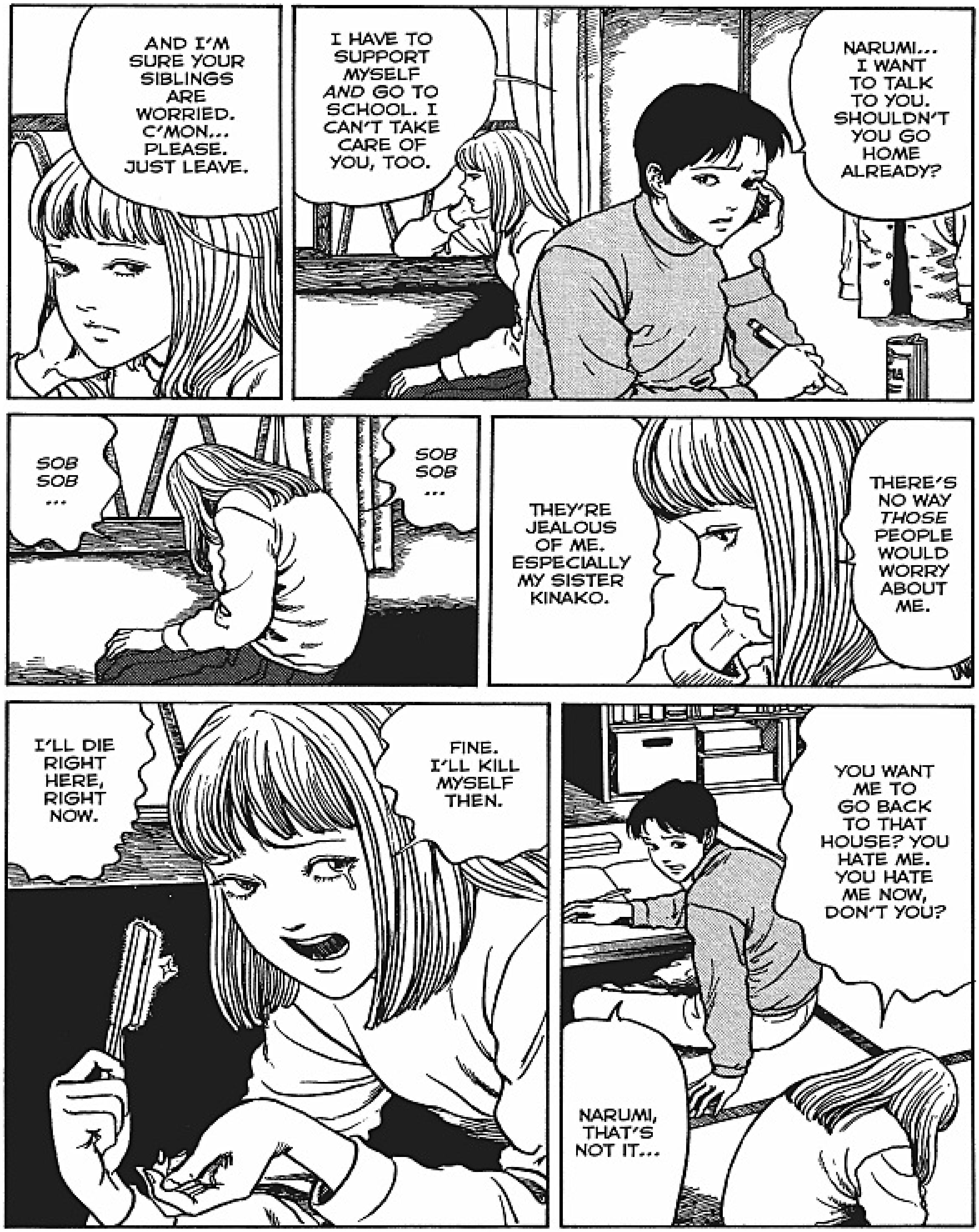

NARUMI!
STOP! DON'T DO ANYTHING RASH!
LET GO!
LET ME DIE!

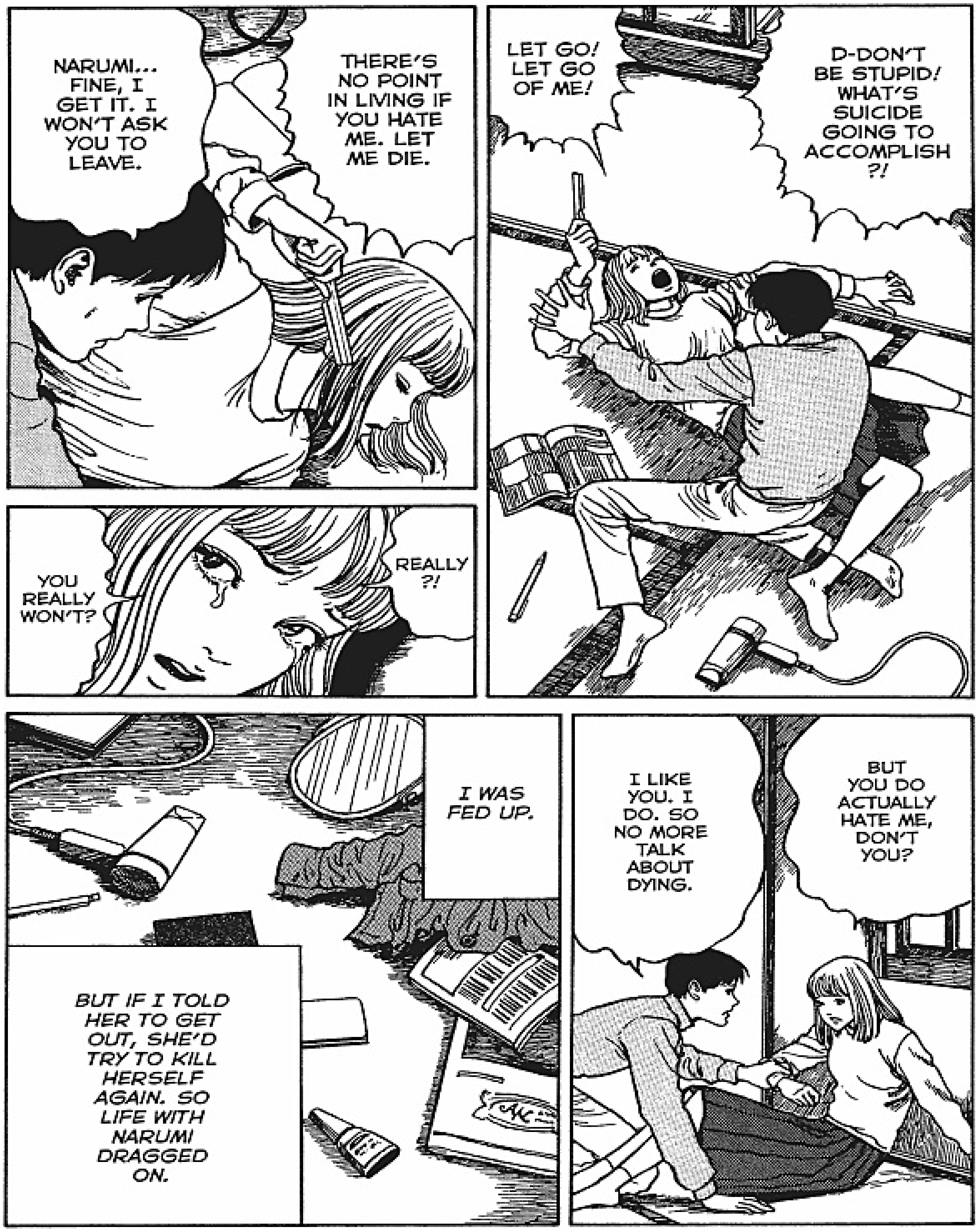

YOU CAN TALK TO ME. I'M LISTENING.
WHY WOULD YOU WANT TO KILL YOURSELF?
SHE SAID SHE STOPPED GOING TO SCHOOL AROUND THE END OF LAST YEAR. AFTER HER PARENTS PASSED AWAY A FEW YEARS BEFORE, SHE LIVED WITH JUST HER FIVE BROTHERS AND SISTERS.
I JUST HATE EVERYTHING.
MINE, TOO, OF COURSE ...
NARUMI HIKIZURI WAS A BEAUTIFUL GIRL. WHEN SHE STARTED MIDDLE SCHOOL, THE EYES OF EVERY BOY IN SCHOOL WERE ON HER.
SHE SAID SHE DIDN'T WANT TO GO HOME, THAT SHE WANTED TO STAY WITH ME FOR A WHILE.
I GUESS SHE DIDN'T WANT TO BE WITH HER SIBLINGS.

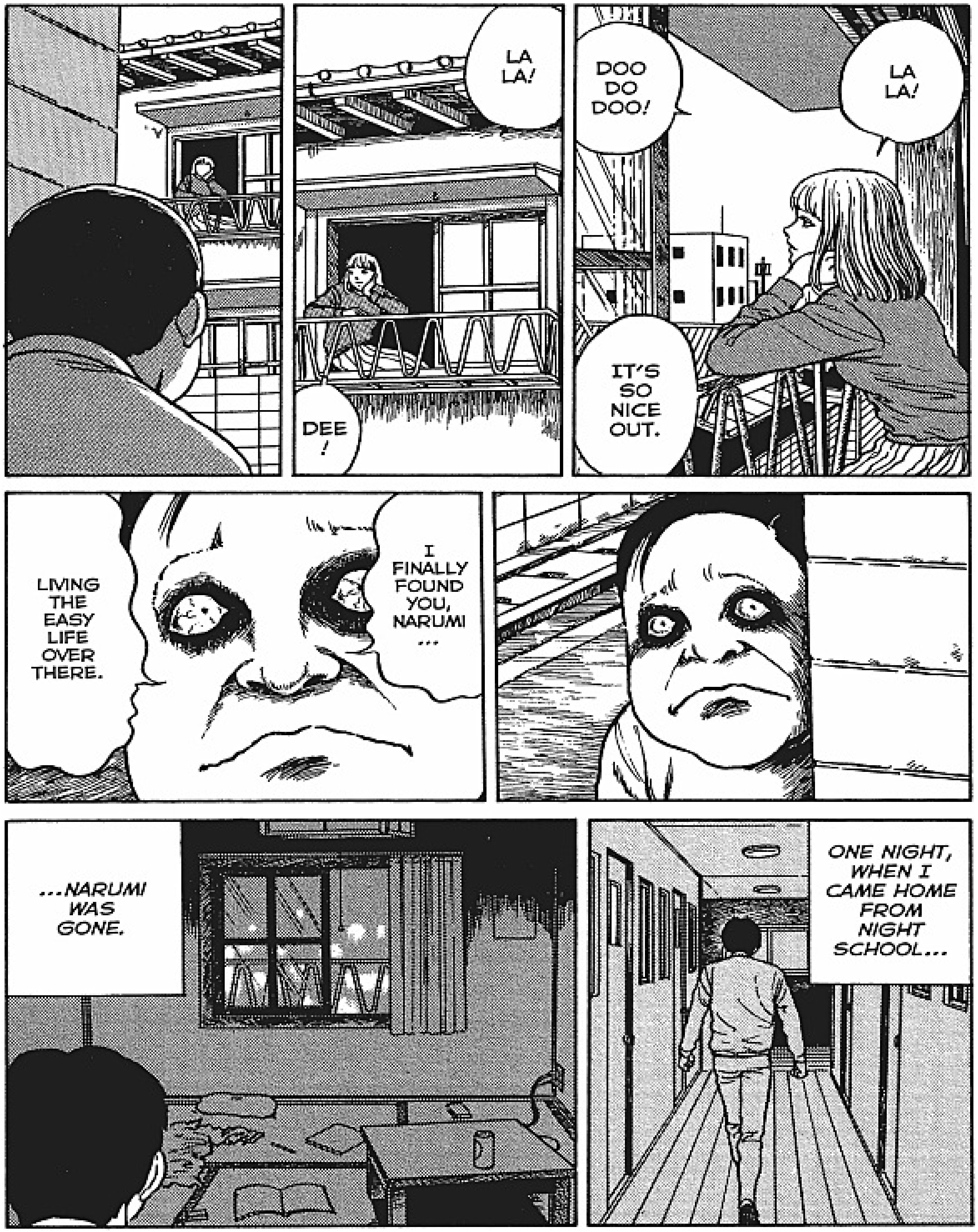

NARUMI HASN'T BEEN HOME IN A WEEK.
HIKIZURI
WHERE ON EARTH DID SHE GET TO?!
SHE'S ALWAYS GOING OFF ON HER OWN!
SHE WANTS TO MAKE PROBLEMS FOR HER BIG BROTHER HERE. ME, THE HEAD OF THIS FAMILY!

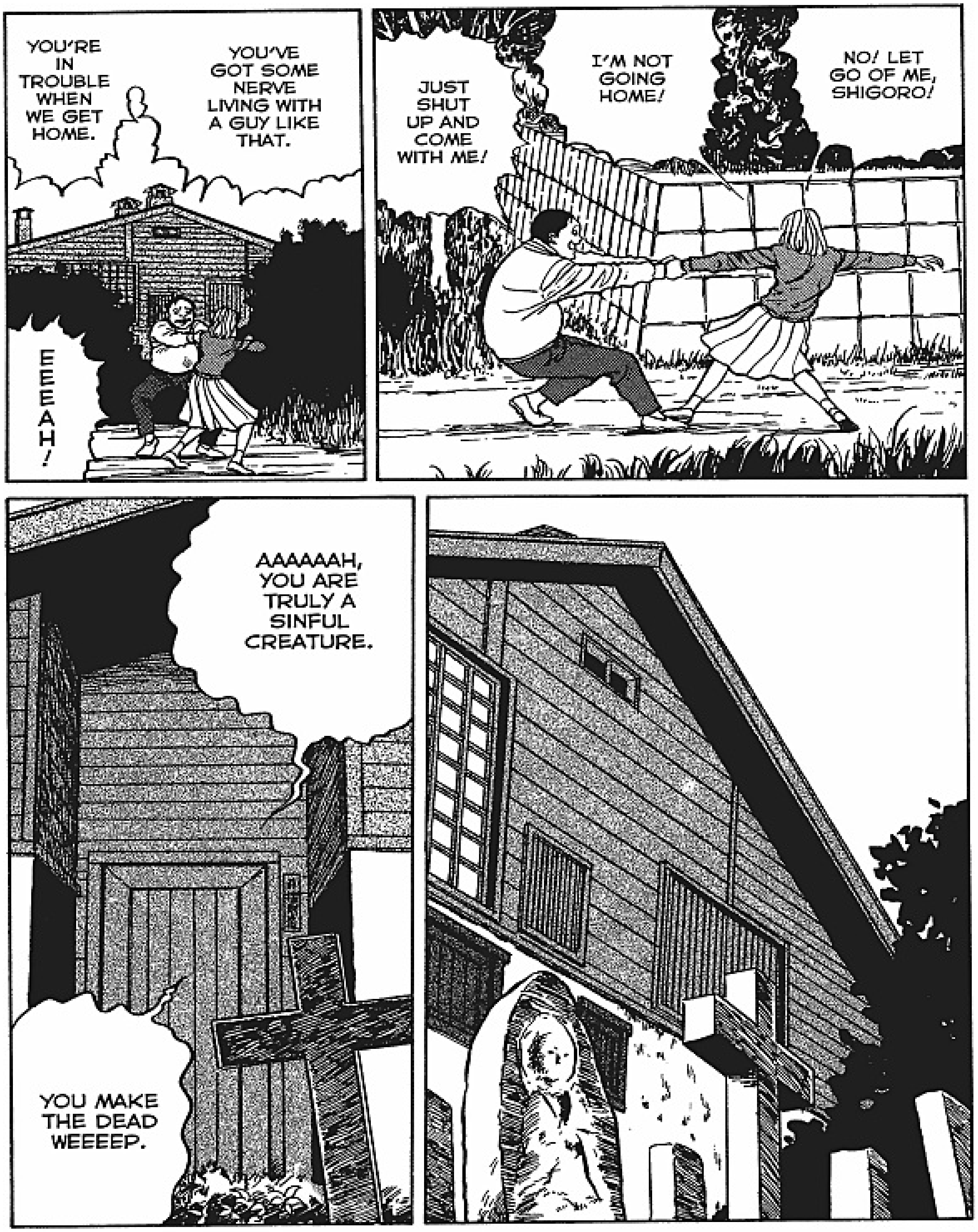

ELDEST SON, KAZUYA HIKIZURI, 19.
I NEED TO REALLY LET HER HAVE IT.
EXACTLY. YOU'RE TOTALLY RIGHT, KAZUYA.
ELDEST DAUGHTER, KINAKO, 18.
SHE'S GOT SOME NERVE STAYING OUT WHEN SHE'S YOUNGER THAN ME.
SECOND SON, SHIGORO, 16.
YOU'RE BOTH RIGHT.
I THINK IT'S NOT OKAY FOR A MERE GIRL LIKE HER TO STAY OUT... YOU THINK SO TOO, RIGHT, HITOSHI? MISAKO?
THIRD SON, HITOSHI, 10.
U-UH-HUH. IT'S BAD.
KEE KEE KEE ...
THIRD DAUGHTER, MISAKO, 8.
AT ANY RATE!
WE HAVE TO FIND NARUMI AND BRING HER HOME RIGHT AWAY!

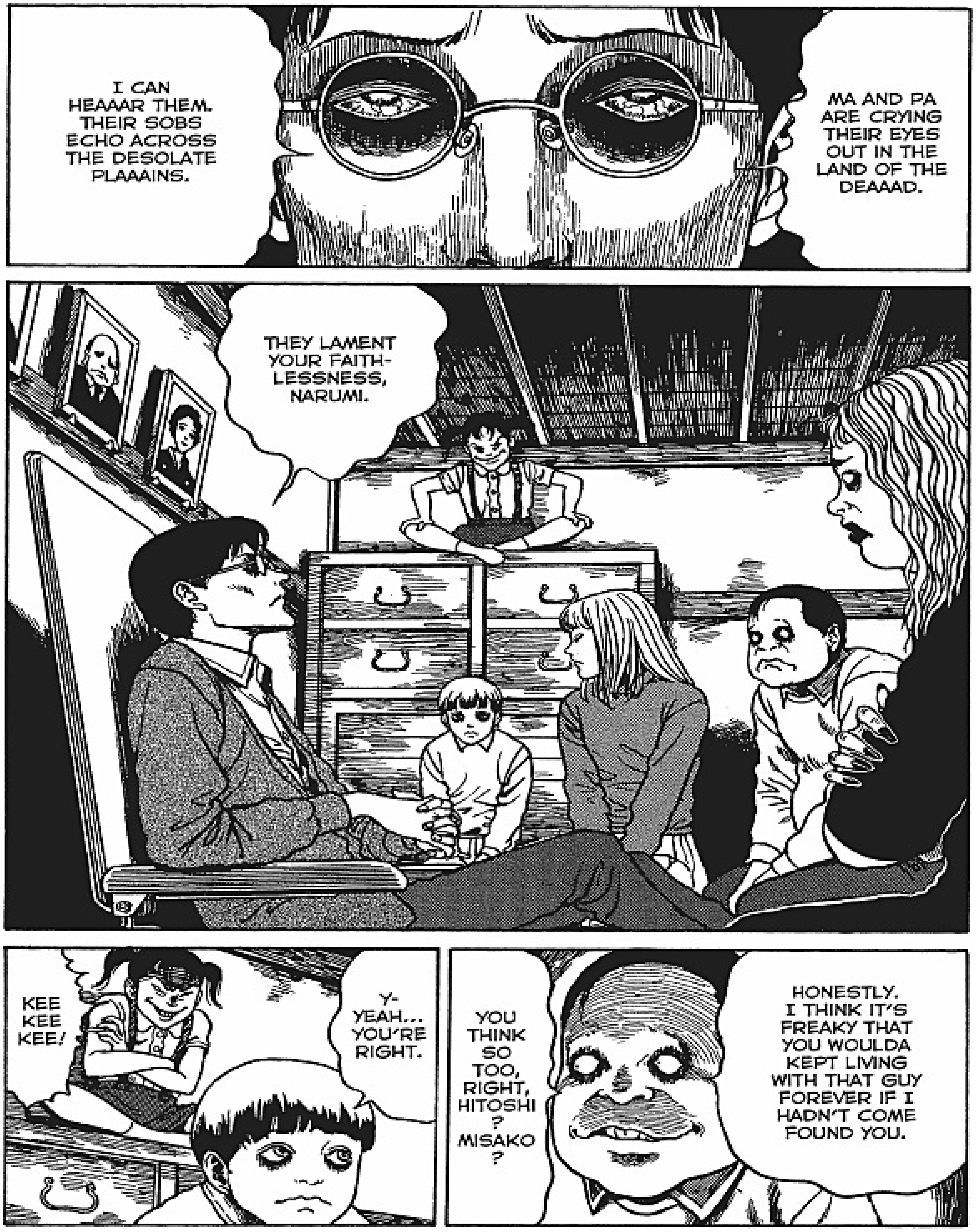

I'M HOME. AAH, I'M TIRED.
WORK WAS ROUGH TODAY. I HATE THE IDEA THAT I'VE GOT NIGHT SCHOOL STILL.
HEY.
NARUMI, WHERE'D THAT NAIL POLISH COME FROM?
DID YOU USE MY SAVINGS AGAIN?
THE FIRST TWO WEEKS OF LIVING WITH NARUMI WERE LIKE A DREAM, LOADS OF FUN, BUT I'D SINCE COME TO UNDERSTAND THAT NARUMI WAS A MESS.
SHE SLEPT LATE, TOOK MONEY FROM MY SAVINGS, AND SPENT THE WHOLE DAY MAKING HERSELF UP. SHE WOULD LEAVE MY ROOM A DISASTER AND NOT EVEN CARE.
I WAS GETTING PRETTY SICK OF IT.

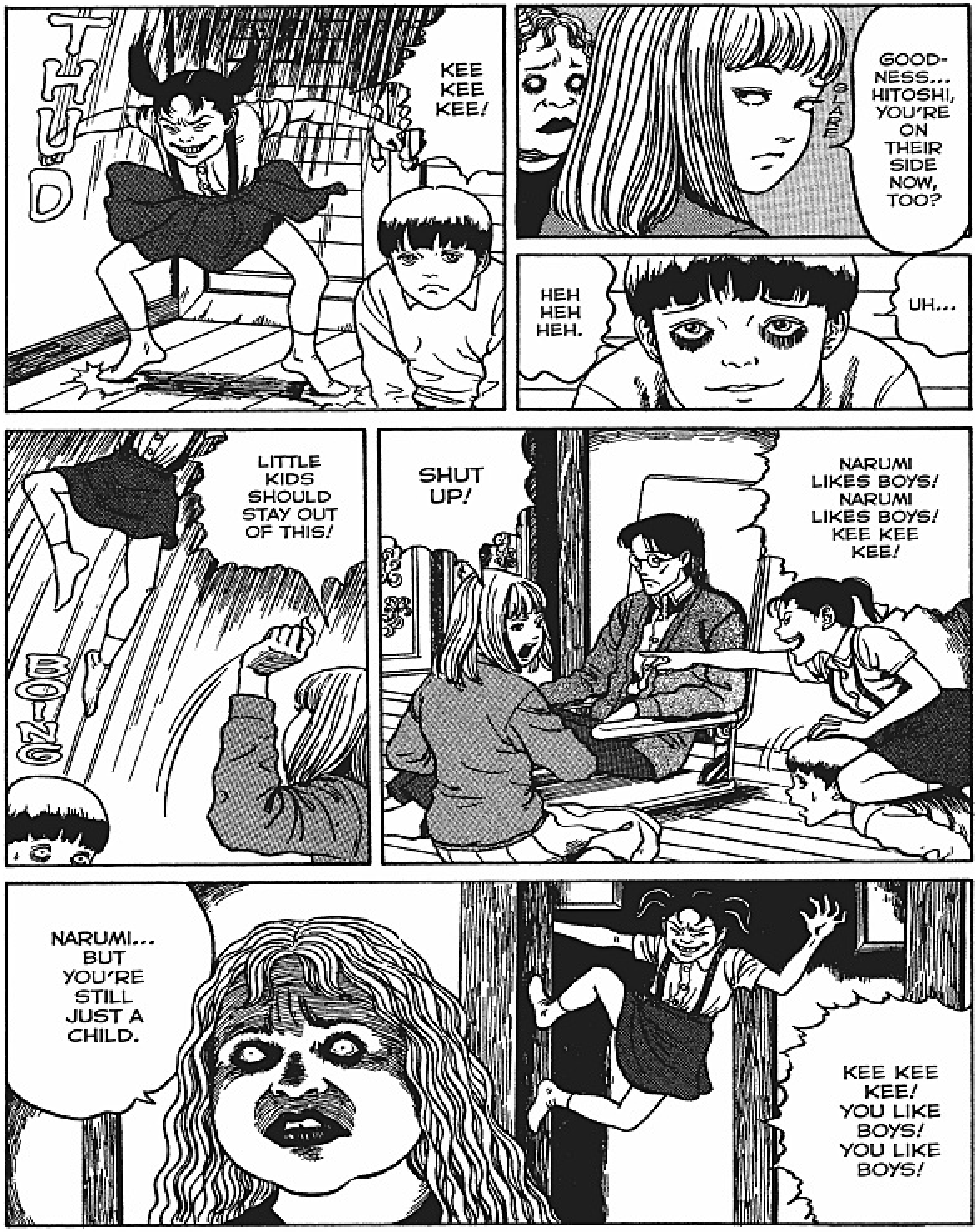

NARUMI... I WANT TO TALK TO YOU. SHOULDN'T YOU GO HOME ALREADY?
I HAVE TO SUPPORT *MYSELF* *AND* GO TO SCHOOL. I CAN'T TAKE CARE OF YOU, TOO.
AND I'M SURE YOUR SIBLINGS ARE WORRIED. C'MON... PLEASE. JUST LEAVE.
THERE'S NO WAY *THOSE* PEOPLE WOULD WORRY ABOUT ME.
THEY'RE JEALOUS OF ME. ESPECIALLY MY SISTER KINAKO.
SOB SOB ...
SOB SOB ...
YOU WANT ME TO GO BACK TO THAT HOUSE? YOU HATE ME. YOU HATE *ME* NOW, DON'T YOU?
NARUMI, THAT'S NOT IT...
FINE. I'LL KILL *MYSELF* THEN.
I'LL DIE RIGHT HERE, RIGHT NOW.

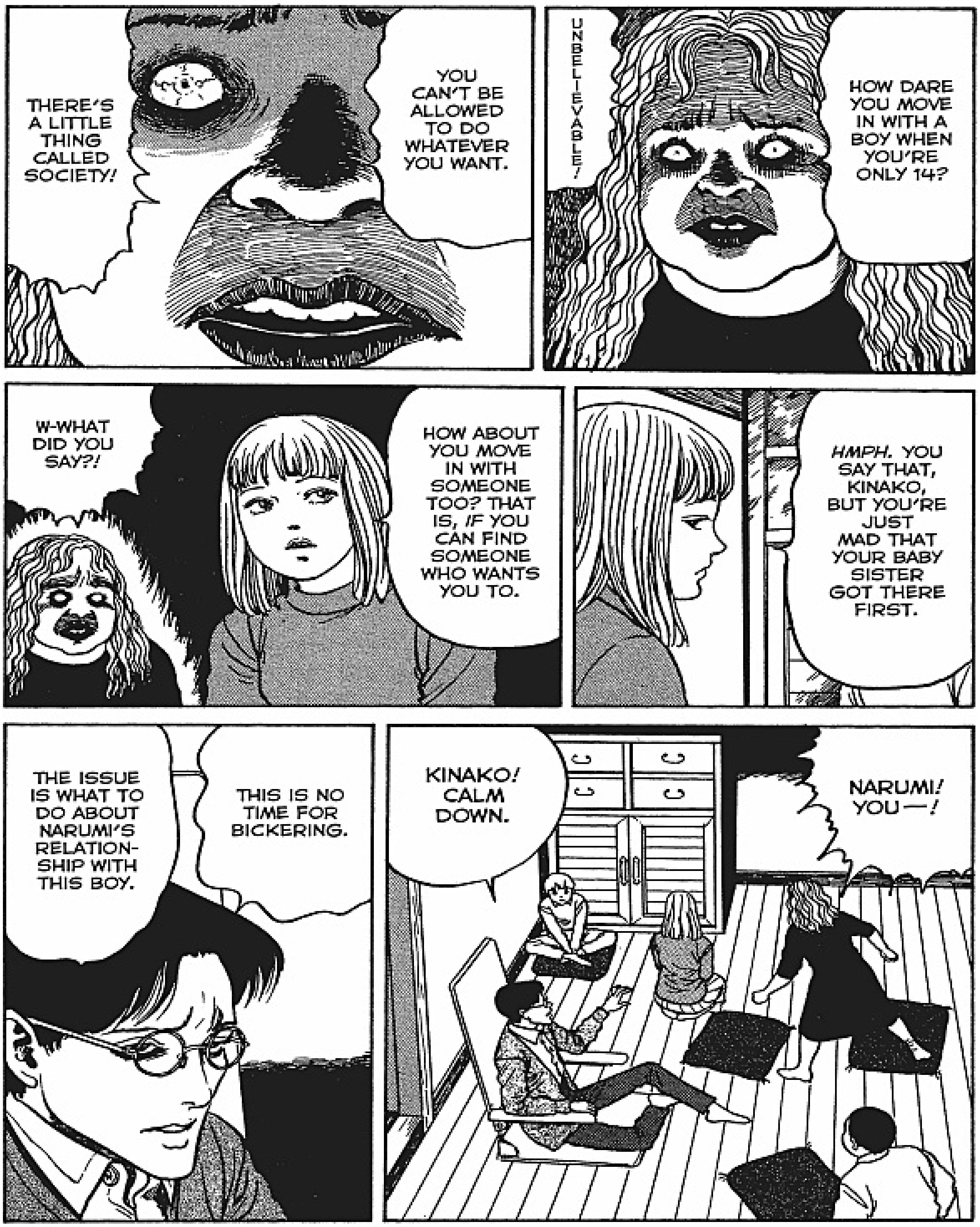

LET GO! LET GO OF ME!
D-DON'T BE STUPID! WHAT'S SUICIDE GOING TO ACCOMPLISH ?!
THERE'S NO POINT IN LIVING IF YOU HATE ME. LET ME DIE.
NARUMI... FINE, I GET IT. I WON'T ASK YOU TO LEAVE.
YOU REALLY WON'T?
REALLY ?!
BUT YOU DO ACTUALLY HATE ME, DON'T YOU?
I LIKE YOU. I DO. SO NO MORE TALK ABOUT DYING.
I WAS FED UP.
BUT IF I TOLD HER TO GET OUT, SHE'D TRY TO KILL HERSELF AGAIN. SO LIFE WITH NARUMI DRAGGED ON.

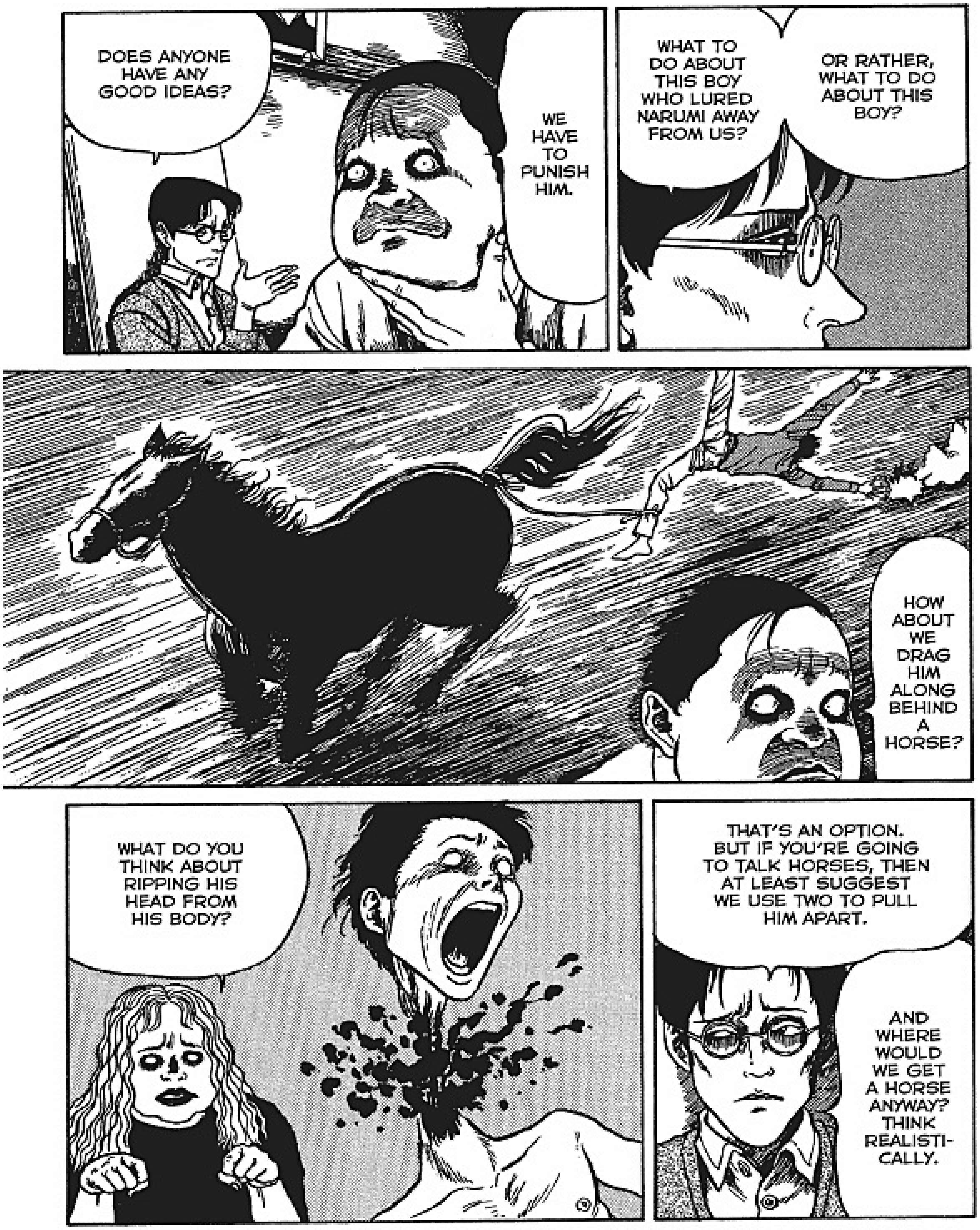

LA LA!
DOO DO DOO!
IT'S SO NICE OUT.
LA LA!
DEE!
I FINALLY FOUND YOU, NARUMI ...
LIVING THE EASY LIFE OVER THERE.
ONE NIGHT, WHEN I CAME HOME FROM NIGHT SCHOOL...
...NARUMI WAS GONE.

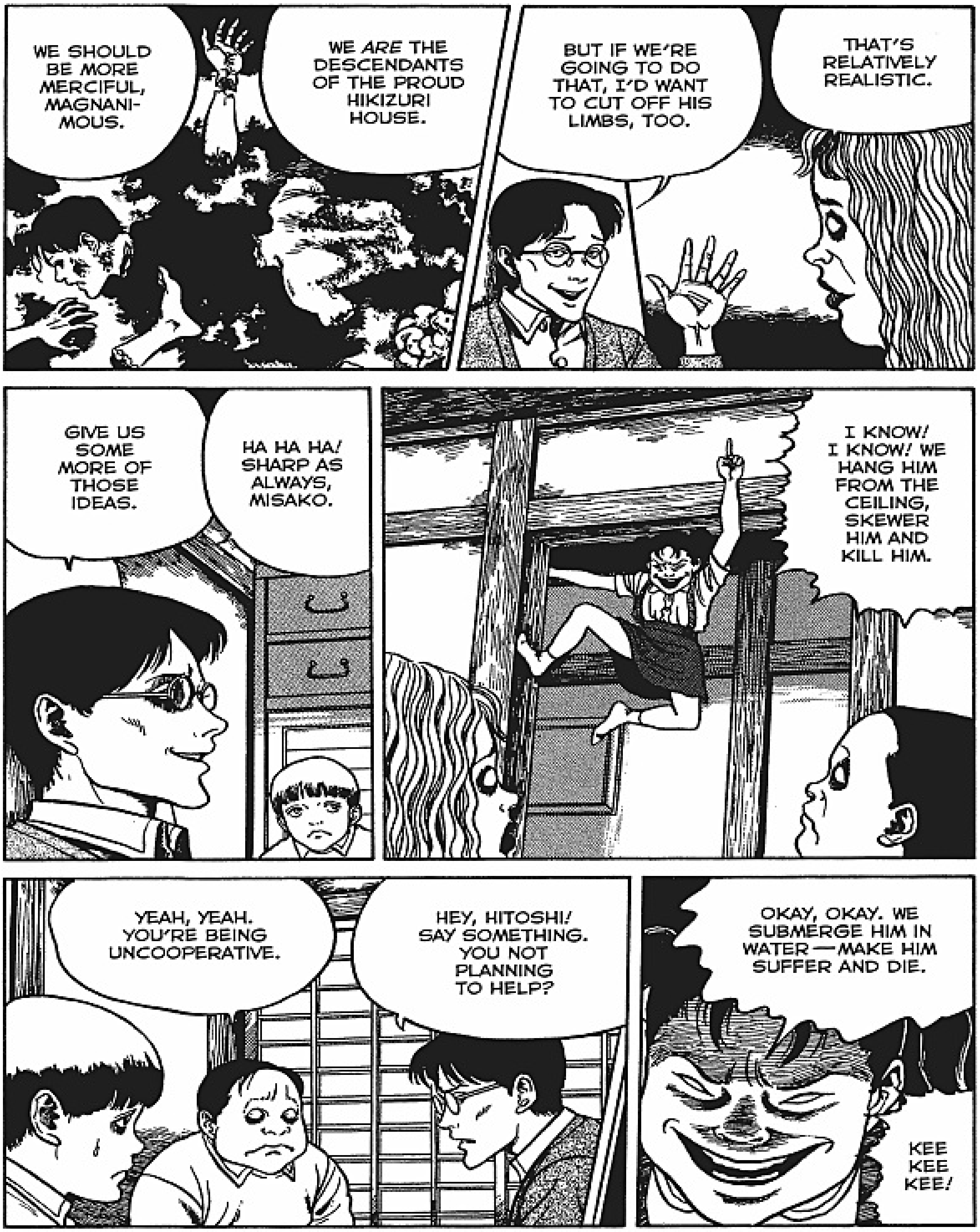

YOU'RE IN TROUBLE WHEN WE GET HOME.
YOU'VE GOT SOME NERVE LIVING WITH A GUY LIKE THAT.
EEEEAH!
JUST SHUT UP AND COME WITH ME!
I'M NOT GOING HOME!
NO! LET GO OF ME, SHIGORO!
AAAAAAH, YOU ARE TRULY A SINFUL CREATURE.
YOU MAKE THE DEAD WEEEEP.

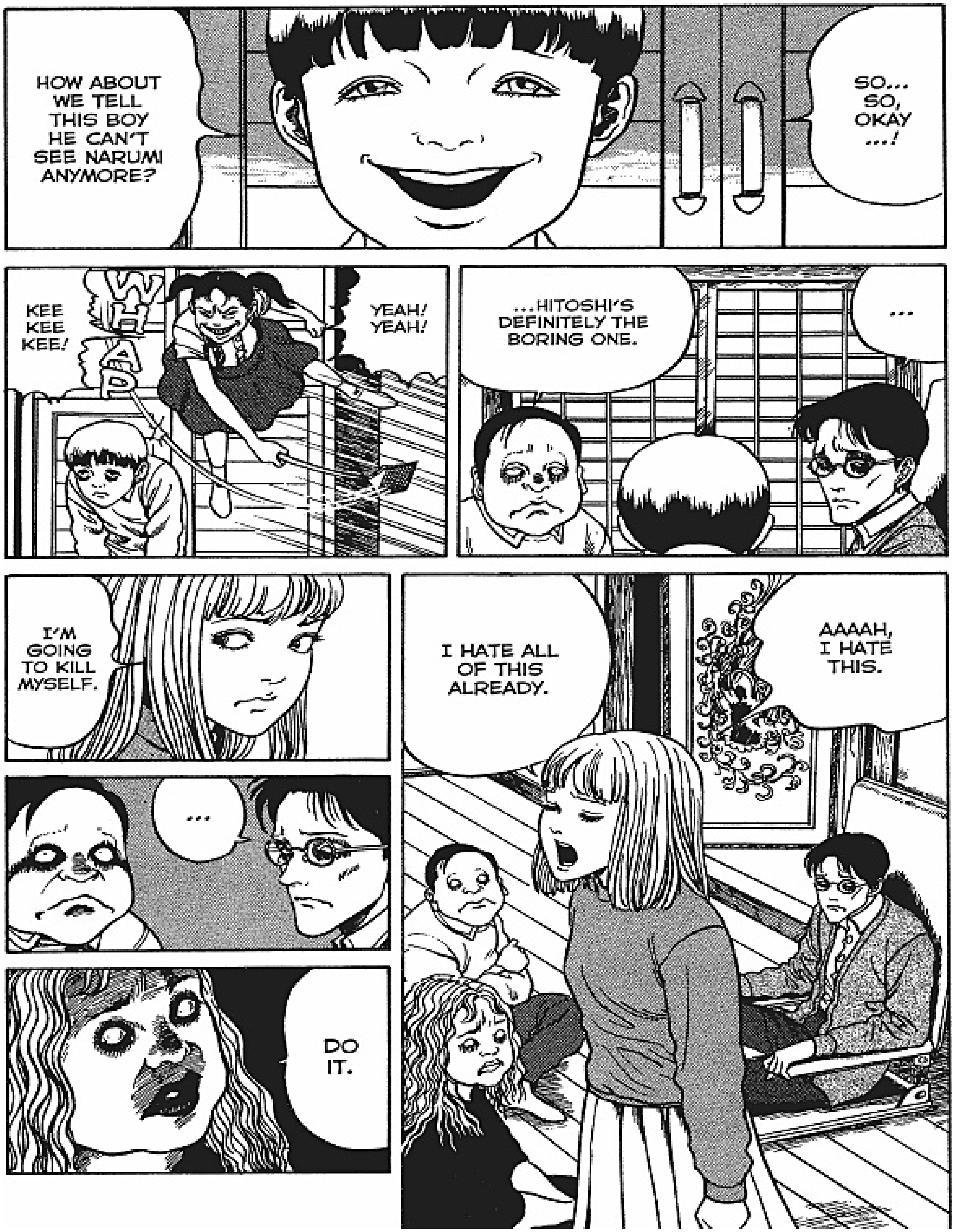

MA AND PA ARE CRYING THEIR EYES OUT IN THE LAND OF THE DEAAAD.
I CAN HEAAAR THEM. THEIR SOBS ECHO ACROSS THE DESOLATE PLAAAINS.
THEY LAMENT YOUR FAITHLESSNESS, NARUMI.
HONESTLY. I THINK IT'S FREAKY THAT YOU WOULDA KEPT LIVING WITH THAT GUY FOREVER IF I HADN'T COME FOUND YOU.
YOU THINK SO TOO, RIGHT, HITOSHI? MISAKO?
Y-YEAH... YOU'RE RIGHT.
KEE KEE KEE!

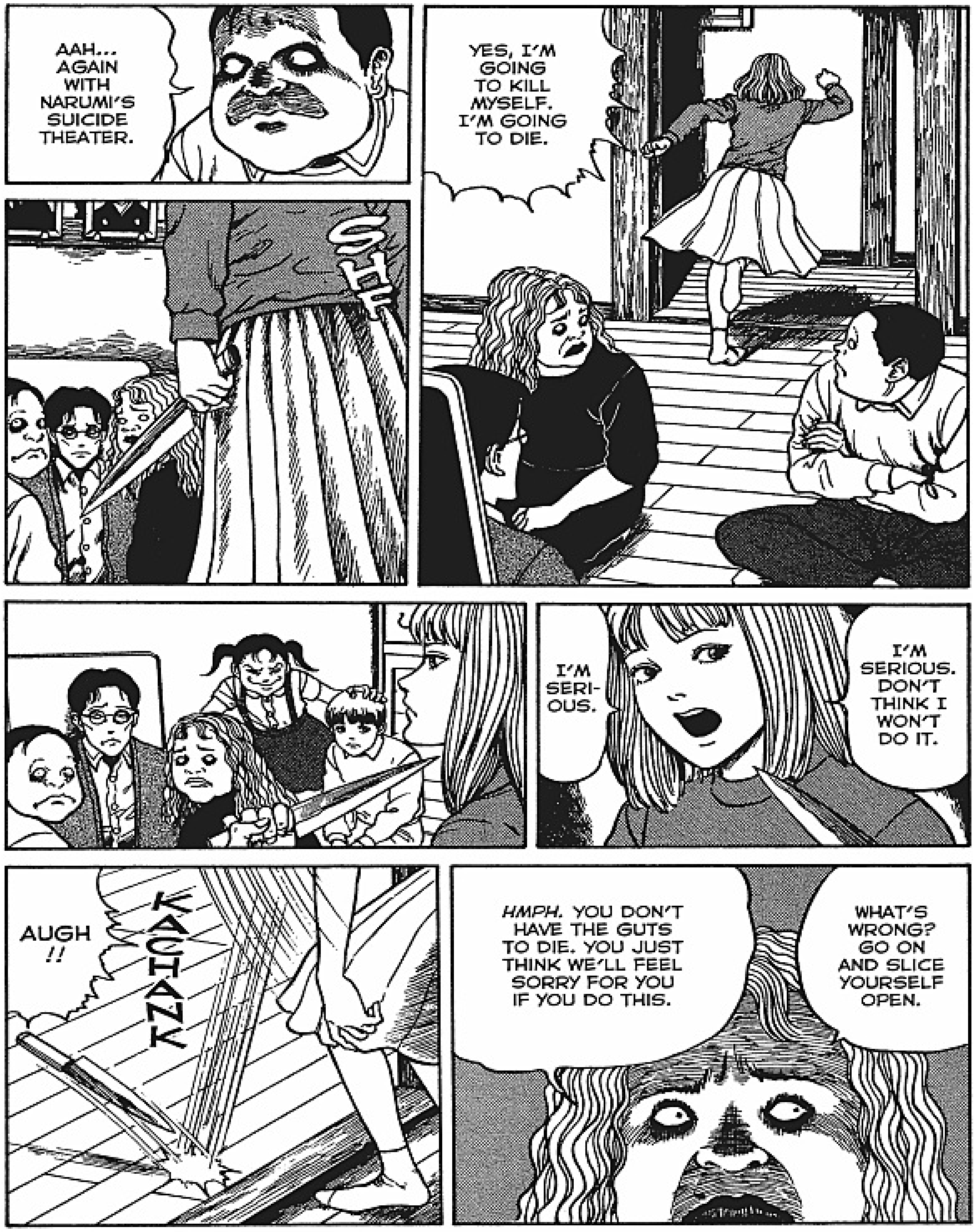

GOODNESS... HITOSHI, YOU'RE ON THEIR SIDE NOW, TOO?
GLARE
UH...
HEH HEH HEH.
KEE KEE KEE!
THUD
NARUMI LIKES BOYS! NARUMI LIKES BOYS! KEE KEE KEE!
SHUT UP!
LITTLE KIDS SHOULD STAY OUT OF THIS!
BOING
KEE KEE KEE! YOU LIKE BOYS! YOU LIKE BOYS!
NARUMI... BUT YOU'RE STILL JUST A CHILD.

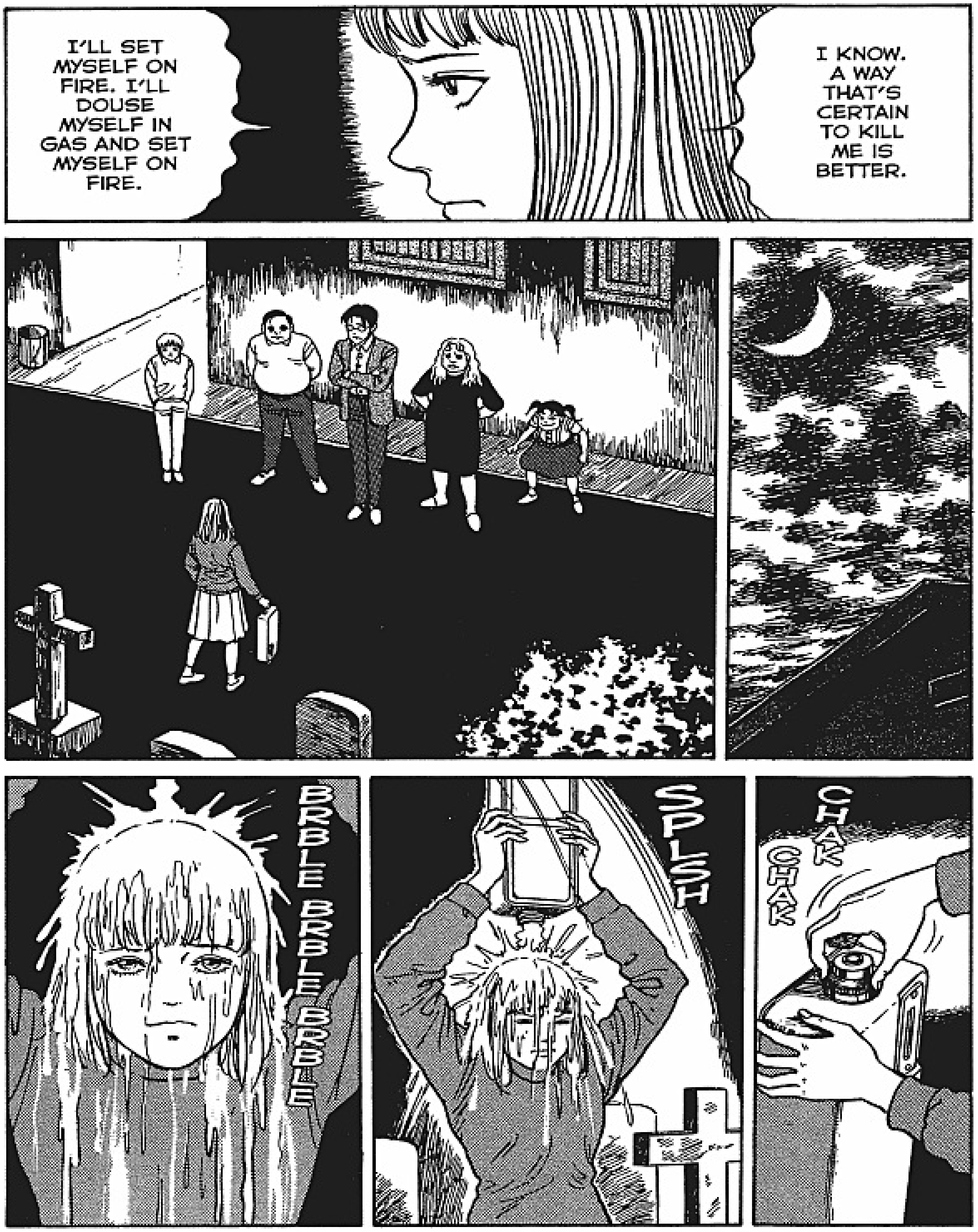

HOW DARE YOU *MOVE* IN WITH A BOY WHEN YOU'RE ONLY 14?
UNBELIEVABLE!
YOU CAN'T BE ALLOWED TO DO WHATEVER YOU WANT.
THERE'S A LITTLE THING CALLED SOCIETY!
HMPH. YOU SAY THAT, KINAKO, BUT YOU'RE JUST MAD THAT YOUR BABY SISTER GOT THERE FIRST.
HOW ABOUT YOU *MOVE* IN WITH SOMEONE TOO? THAT IS, *IF* YOU CAN FIND SOMEONE WHO WANTS YOU TO.
W-WHAT DID YOU SAY?!
NARUMI! YOU—!
KINAKO! CALM DOWN.
THIS IS NO TIME FOR BICKERING.
THE ISSUE IS WHAT TO DO ABOUT NARUMI'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THIS BOY.

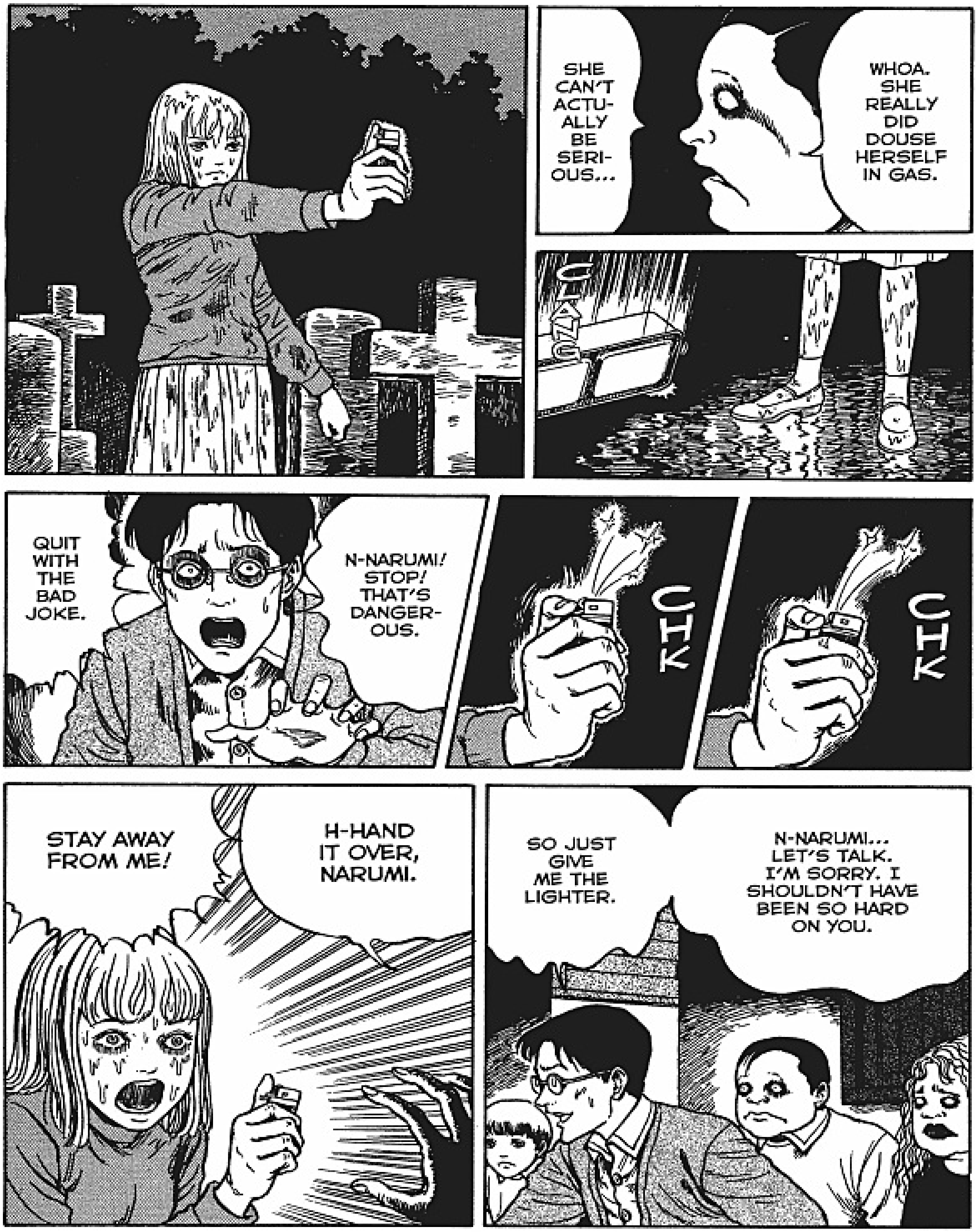

DOES ANYONE HAVE ANY GOOD IDEAS?
WE HAVE TO PUNISH HIM.
WHAT TO DO ABOUT THIS BOY WHO LURED NARUMI AWAY FROM US?
OR RATHER, WHAT TO DO ABOUT THIS BOY?
HOW ABOUT WE DRAG HIM ALONG BEHIND A HORSE?
WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT RIPPING HIS HEAD FROM HIS BODY?
THAT'S AN OPTION. BUT IF YOU'RE GOING TO TALK HORSES, THEN AT LEAST SUGGEST WE USE TWO TO PULL HIM APART.
AND WHERE WOULD WE GET A HORSE ANYWAY? THINK REALISTI-CALLY.

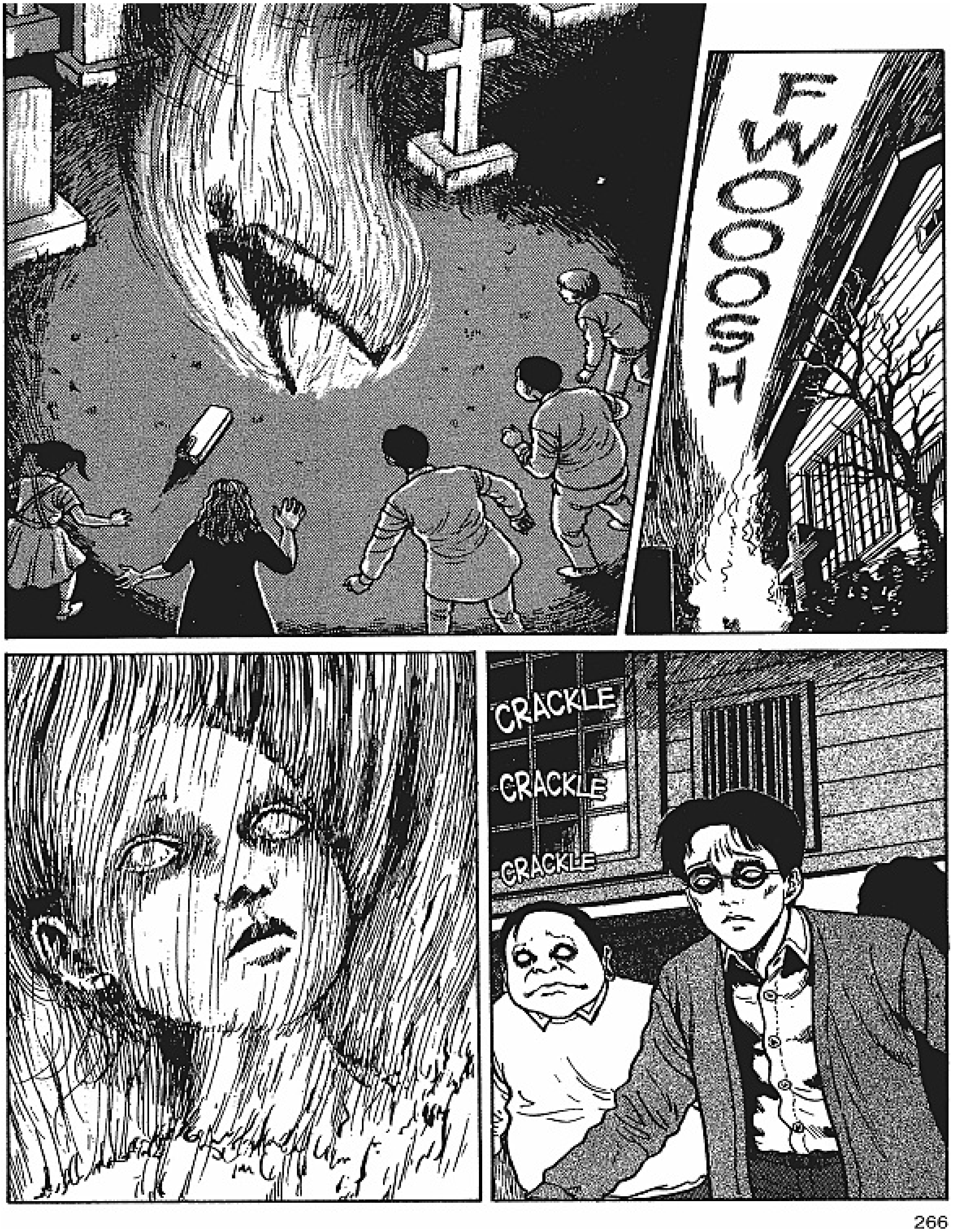

WE SHOULD BE MORE MERCIFUL, MAGNANIMOUS.
WE *ARE* THE DESCENDANTS OF THE PROUD HIKIZURI HOUSE.
BUT IF WE'RE GOING TO DO THAT, I'D WANT TO CUT OFF HIS LIMBS, TOO.
THAT'S RELATIVELY REALISTIC.
GIVE US SOME MORE OF THOSE IDEAS.
HA HA HA! SHARP AS ALWAYS, MISAKO.
I KNOW! I KNOW! WE HANG HIM FROM THE CEILING, SKEWER HIM AND KILL HIM.
YEAH, YEAH. YOU'RE BEING UNCOOPERATIVE.
HEY, HITOSHI! SAY SOMETHING. YOU NOT PLANNING TO HELP?
OKAY, OKAY. WE SUBMERGE HIM IN WATER—MAKE HIM SUFFER AND DIE.
KEE KEE KEE!

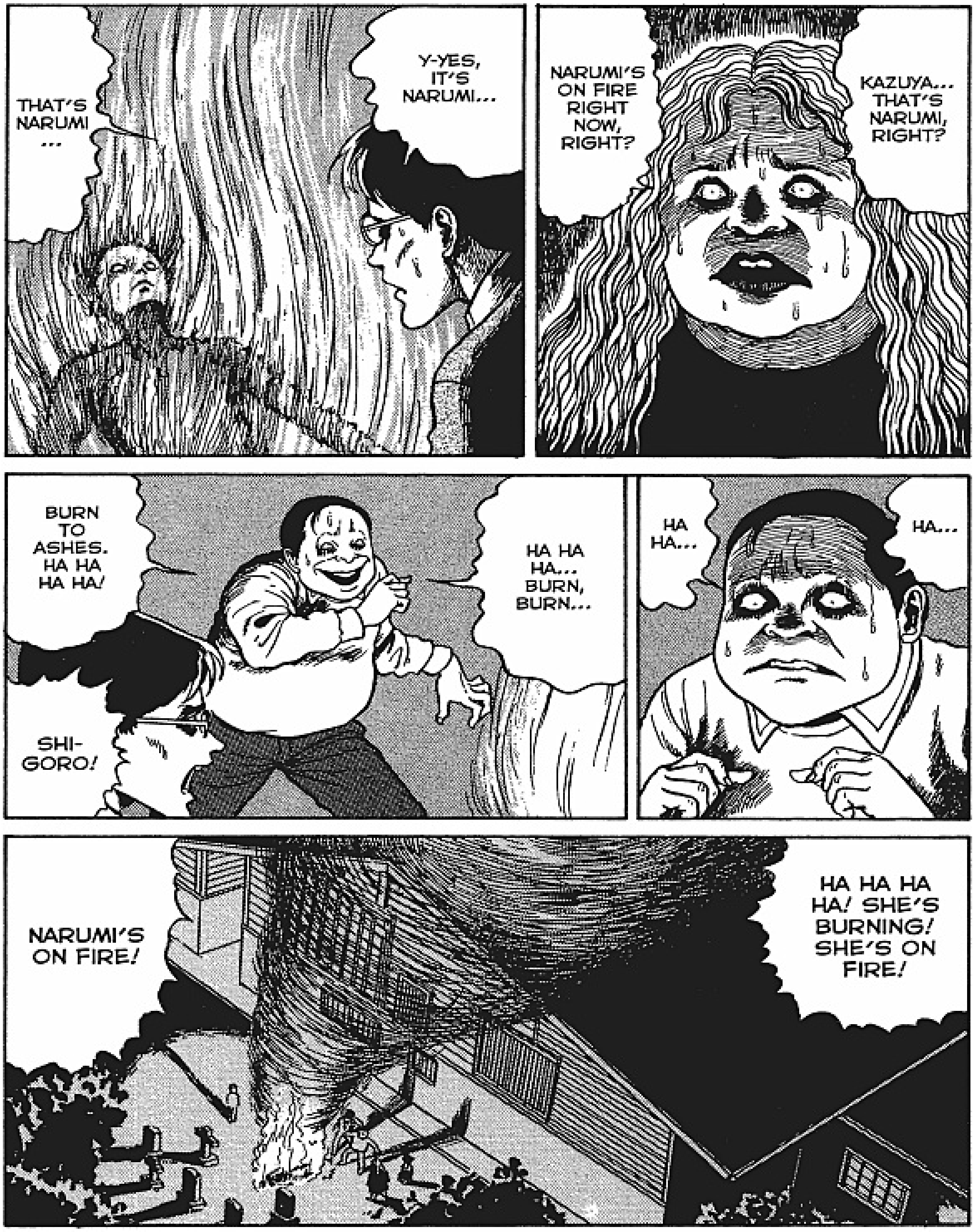

SO... SO, OKAY ...!
HOW ABOUT WE TELL THIS BOY HE CAN'T SEE NARUMI ANYMORE?
...
...HITOSHI'S DEFINITELY THE BORING ONE.
YEAH! YEAH!
WHAP
KEE KEE KEE!
AAAAH, I HATE THIS.
I HATE ALL OF THIS ALREADY.
I'M GOING TO KILL MYSELF.
...
DO IT.

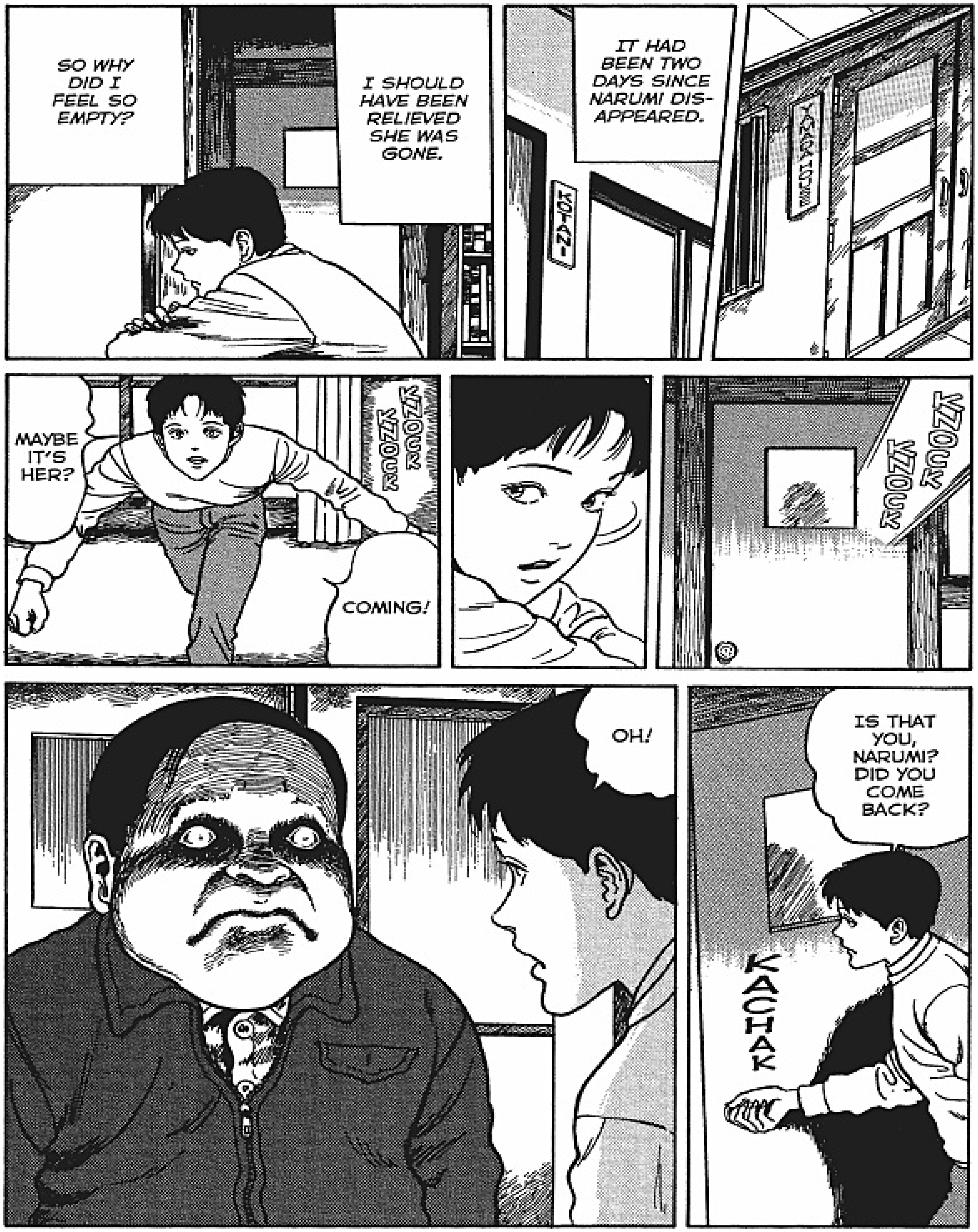

AAH... AGAIN WITH NARUMI'S SUICIDE THEATER.
YES, I'M GOING TO KILL MYSELF. I'M GOING TO DIE.
SHF
I'M SERI-OUS.
I'M SERIOUS. DON'T THINK I WON'T DO IT.
AUGH !!
KACHANK
HMPH. YOU DON'T HAVE THE GUTS TO DIE. YOU JUST THINK WE'LL FEEL SORRY FOR YOU IF YOU DO THIS.
WHAT'S WRONG? GO ON AND SLICE YOURSELF OPEN.

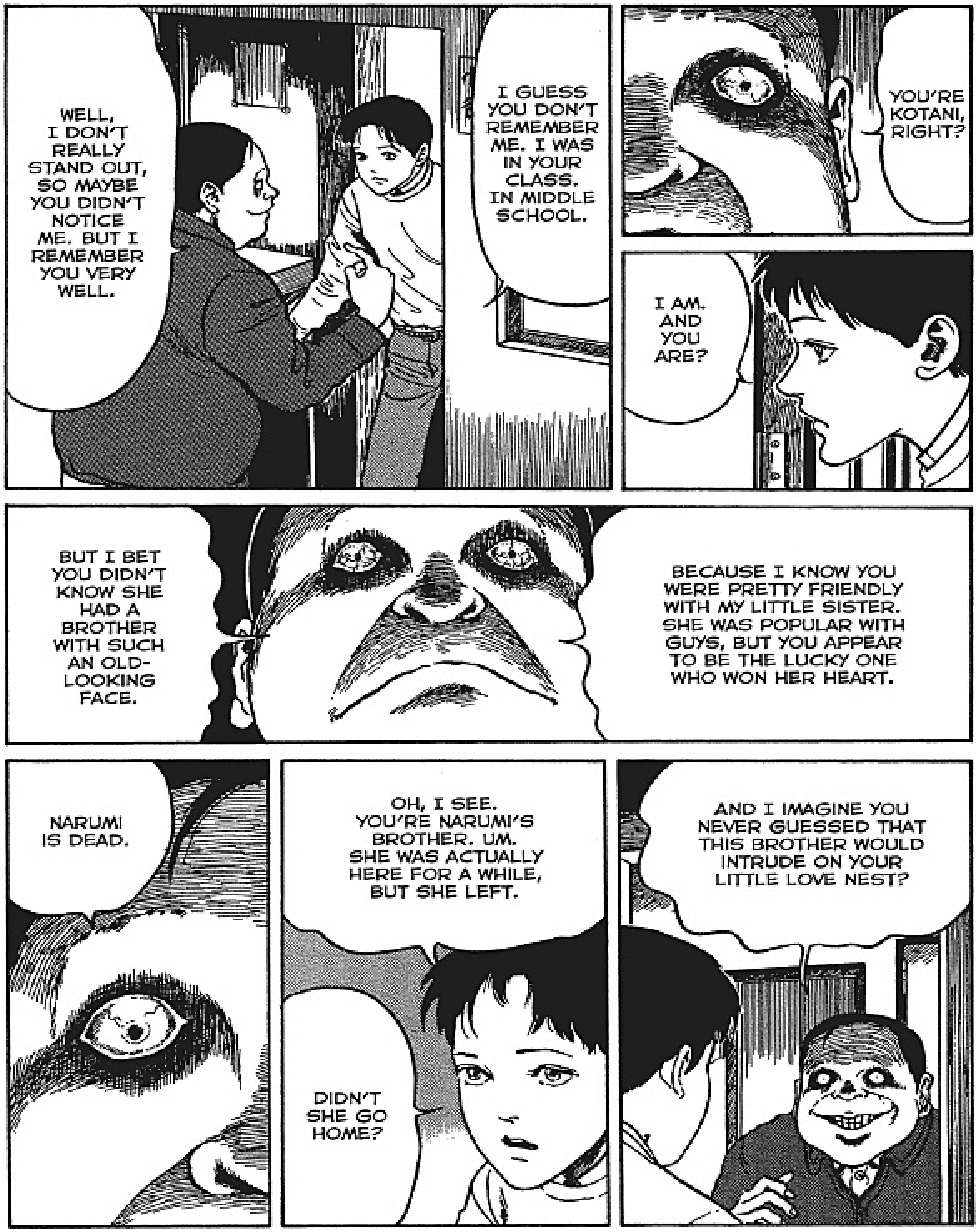

I KNOW. A WAY THAT'S CERTAIN TO KILL ME IS BETTER.
I'LL SET MYSELF ON FIRE. I'LL DOUSE MYSELF IN GAS AND SET MYSELF ON FIRE.
CHAK CHAK
SPLSH
BRBLE BRBLE BRBLE

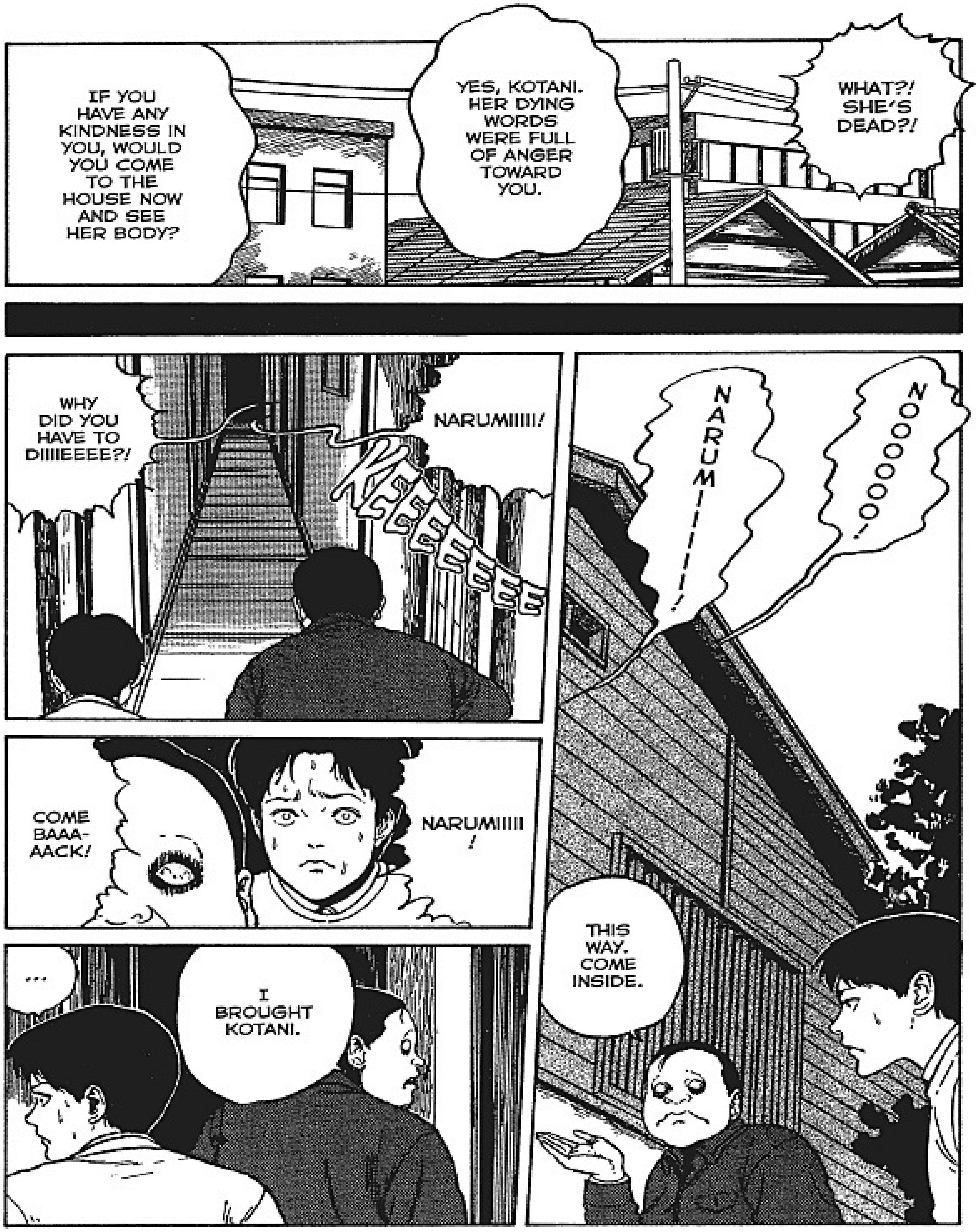

WHOA. SHE REALLY DID DOUSE HERSELF IN GAS.
SHE CAN'T ACTUALLY BE SERIOUS...
CLANG
CHK
CHK
N-NARUMI! STOP! THAT'S DANGEROUS.
QUIT WITH THE BAD JOKE.
N-NARUMI... LET'S TALK. I'M SORRY. I SHOULDN'T HAVE BEEN SO HARD ON YOU.
SO JUST GIVE ME THE LIGHTER.
H-HAND IT OVER, NARUMI.
STAY AWAY FROM ME!

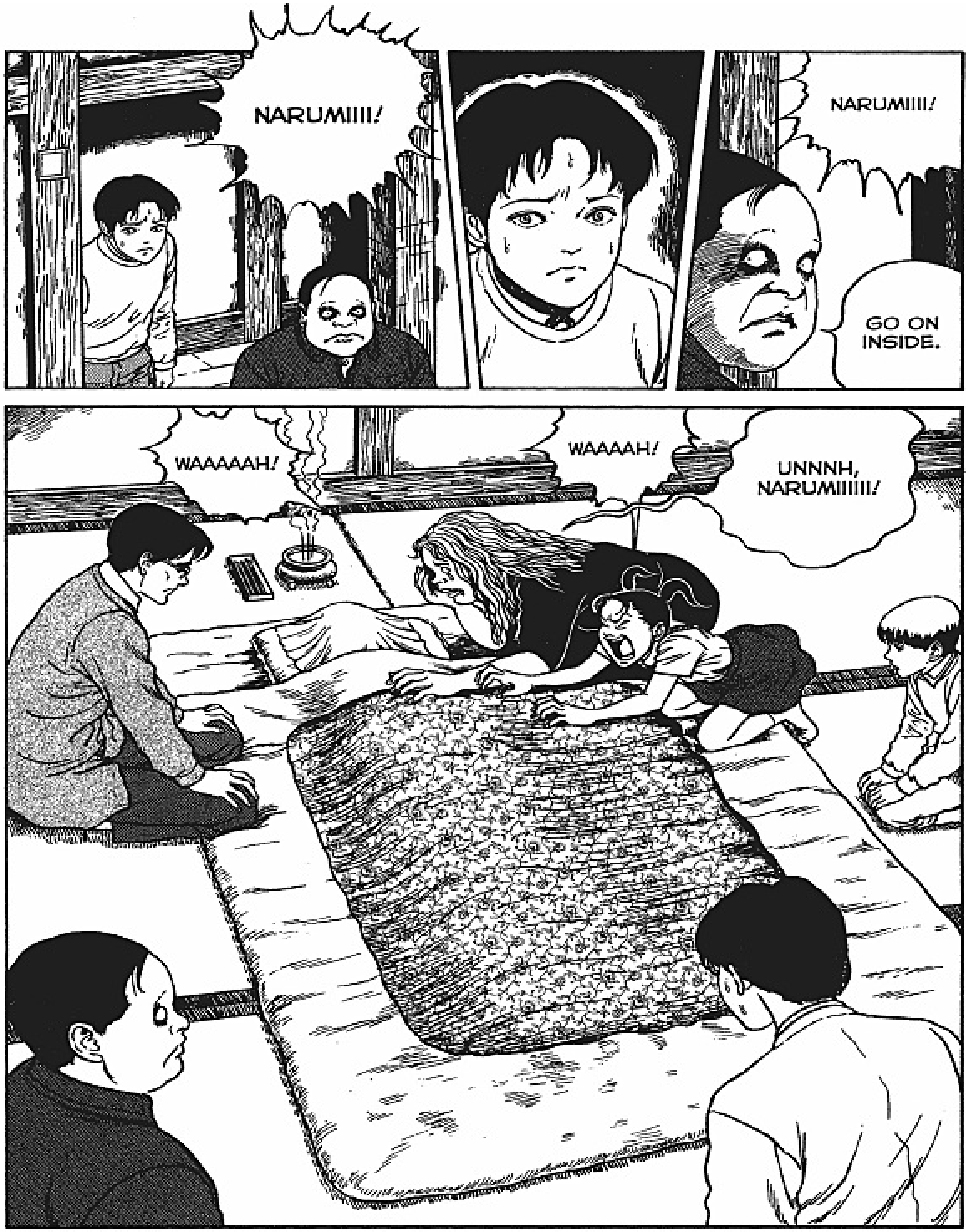

FWOOOSH
CRACKLE
CRACKLE
CRACKLE

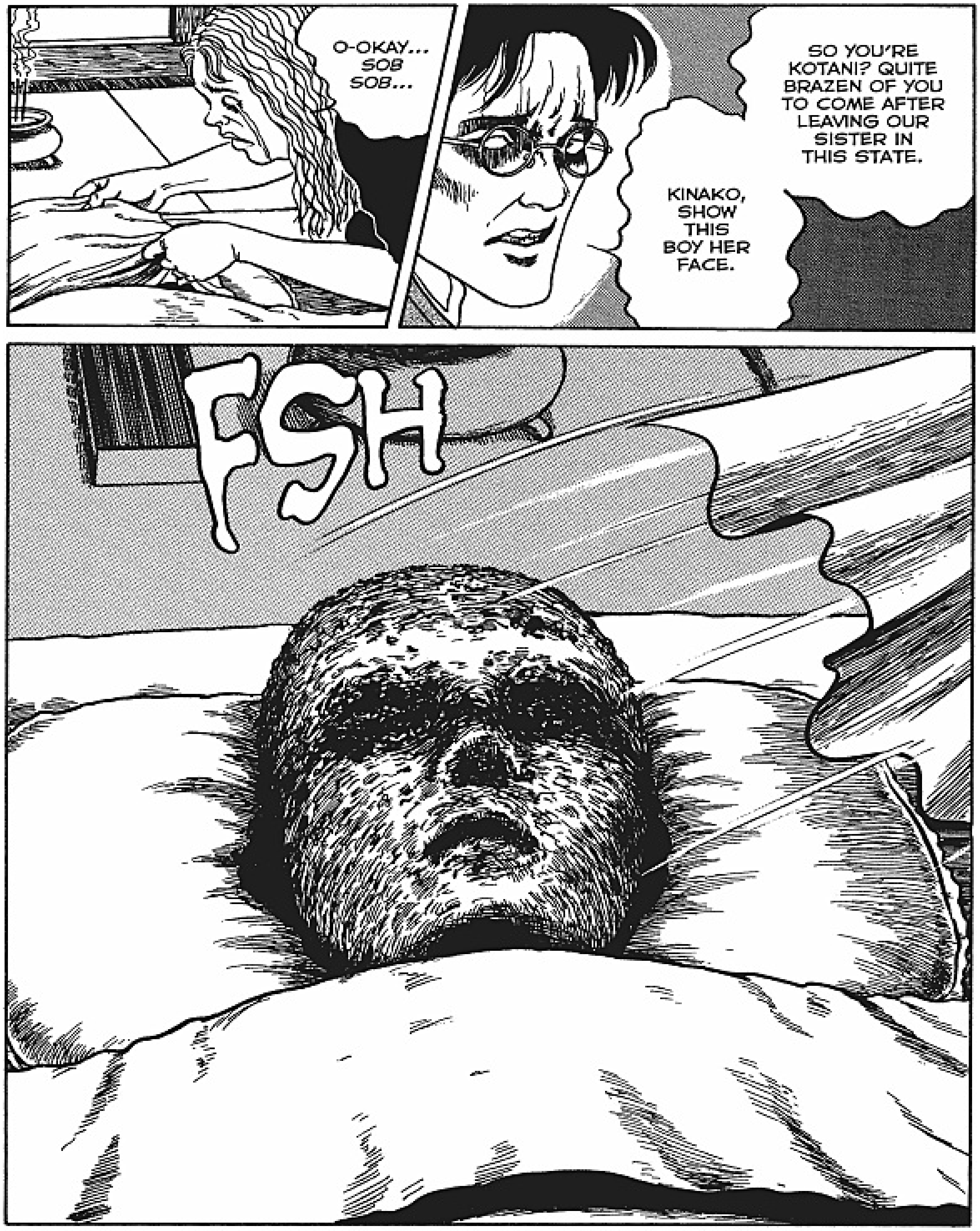

KAZUYA... THAT'S NARUMI, RIGHT?
NARUMI'S ON FIRE RIGHT NOW, RIGHT?
Y-YES, IT'S NARUMI...
THAT'S NARUMI ...
HA...
HA HA...
HA HA HA... BURN, BURN...
BURN TO ASHES. HA HA HA HA!
SHIGORO!
HA HA HA HA! SHE'S BURNING! SHE'S ON FIRE!
NARUMI'S ON FIRE!

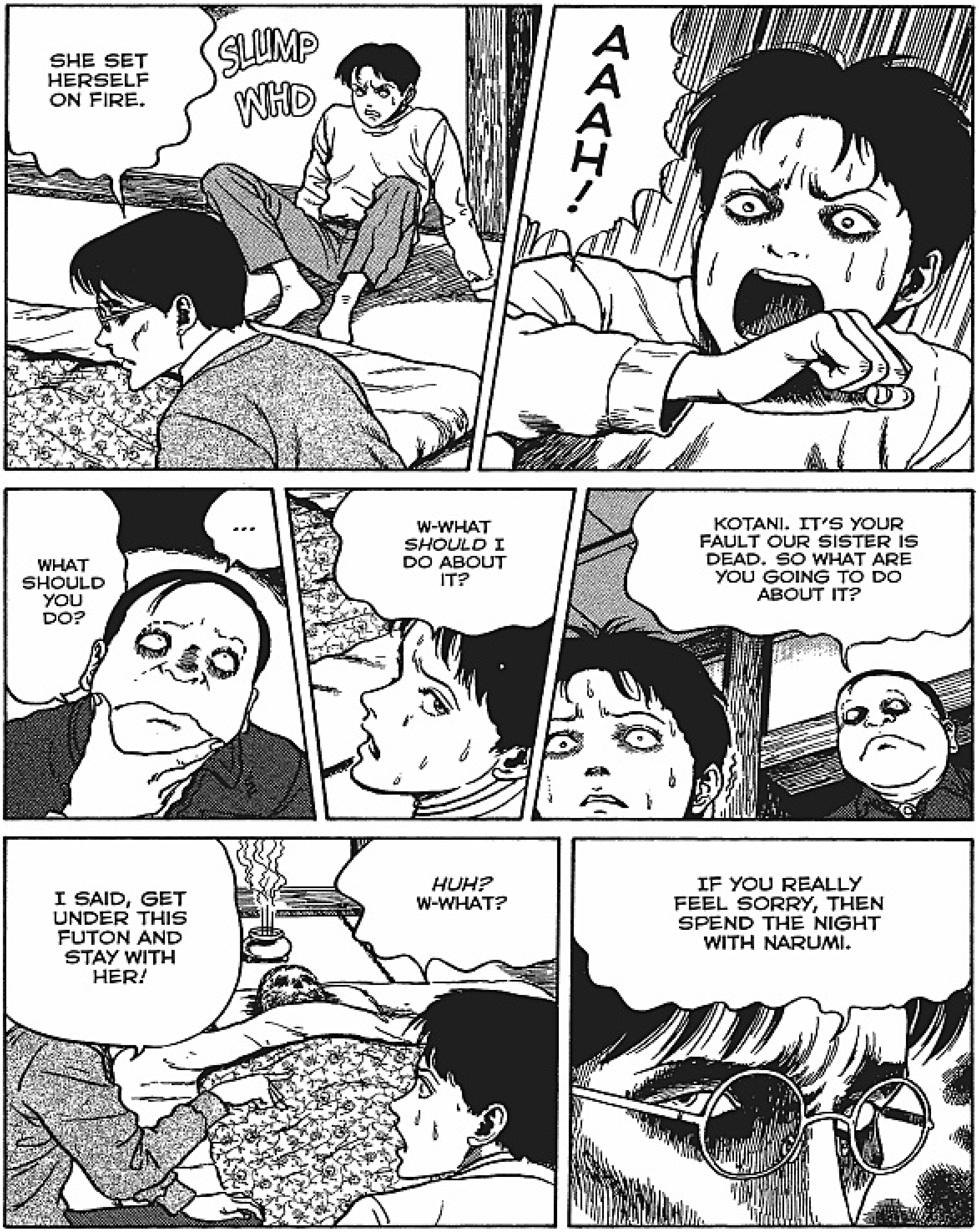

KOTANI
IT HAD BEEN TWO DAYS SINCE NARUMI DISAPPEARED.
I SHOULD HAVE BEEN RELIEVED SHE WAS GONE.
SO WHY DID I FEEL SO EMPTY?
KNOCK KNOCK
KNOCK KNOCK
COMING!
MAYBE IT'S HER?
IS THAT YOU, NARUMI? DID YOU COME BACK?
KACHAK
OH!

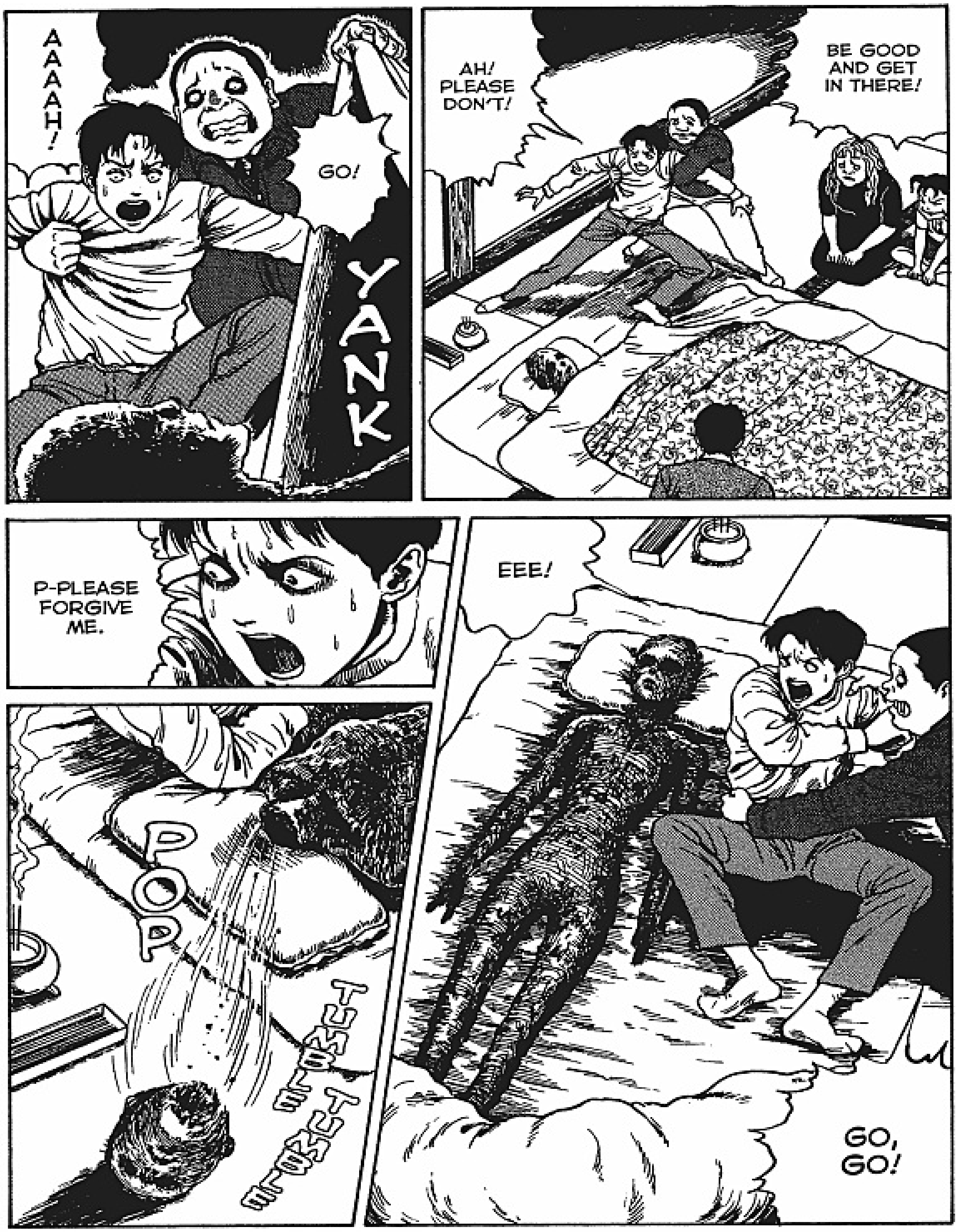

YOU'RE KOTANI, RIGHT?
I AM. AND YOU ARE?
I GUESS YOU DON'T REMEMBER ME. I WAS IN YOUR CLASS. IN MIDDLE SCHOOL.
WELL, I DON'T REALLY STAND OUT, SO MAYBE YOU DIDN'T NOTICE ME. BUT I REMEMBER YOU VERY WELL.
BECAUSE I KNOW YOU WERE PRETTY FRIENDLY WITH MY LITTLE SISTER. SHE WAS POPULAR WITH GUYS, BUT YOU APPEAR TO BE THE LUCKY ONE WHO WON HER HEART.
BUT I BET YOU DIDN'T KNOW SHE HAD A BROTHER WITH SUCH AN OLD-LOOKING FACE.
AND I IMAGINE YOU NEVER GUESSED THAT THIS BROTHER WOULD INTRUDE ON YOUR LITTLE LOVE NEST?
OH, I SEE. YOU'RE NARUMI'S BROTHER. UM. SHE WAS ACTUALLY HERE FOR A WHILE, BUT SHE LEFT.
DIDN'T SHE GO HOME?
NARUMI IS DEAD.

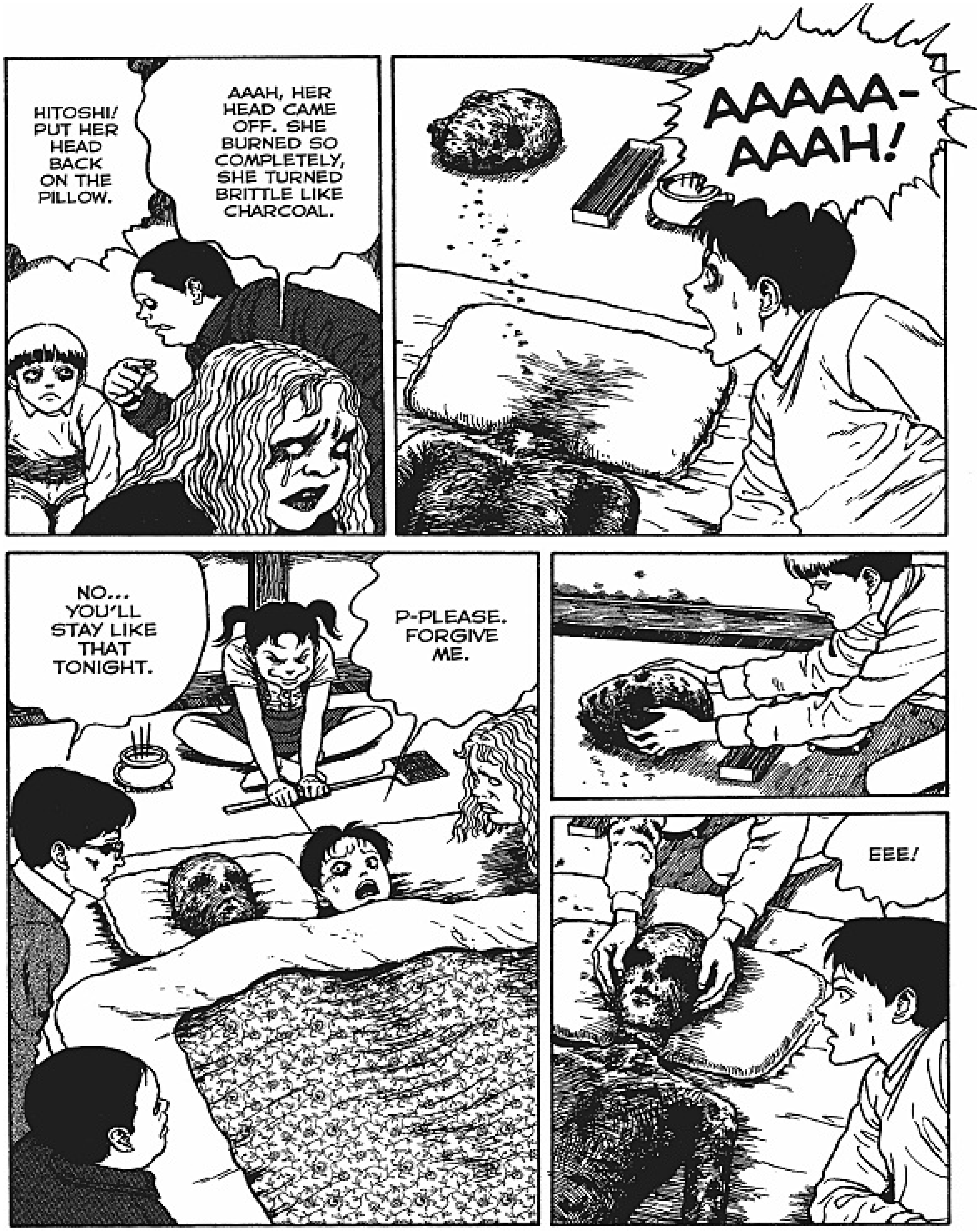

WHAT?! SHE'S DEAD?!
YES, KOTANI. HER DYING WORDS WERE FULL OF ANGER TOWARD YOU.
IF YOU HAVE ANY KINDNESS IN YOU, WOULD YOU COME TO THE HOUSE NOW AND SEE HER BODY?
NOOOOOOO!
NARUMI—!
THIS WAY. COME INSIDE.
NARUMIIIII!
KEEEEEEE
WHY DID YOU HAVE TO DIIIIEEEE?!
NARUMIIIII!
COME BAAA-AACK!
I BROUGHT KOTANI.
...

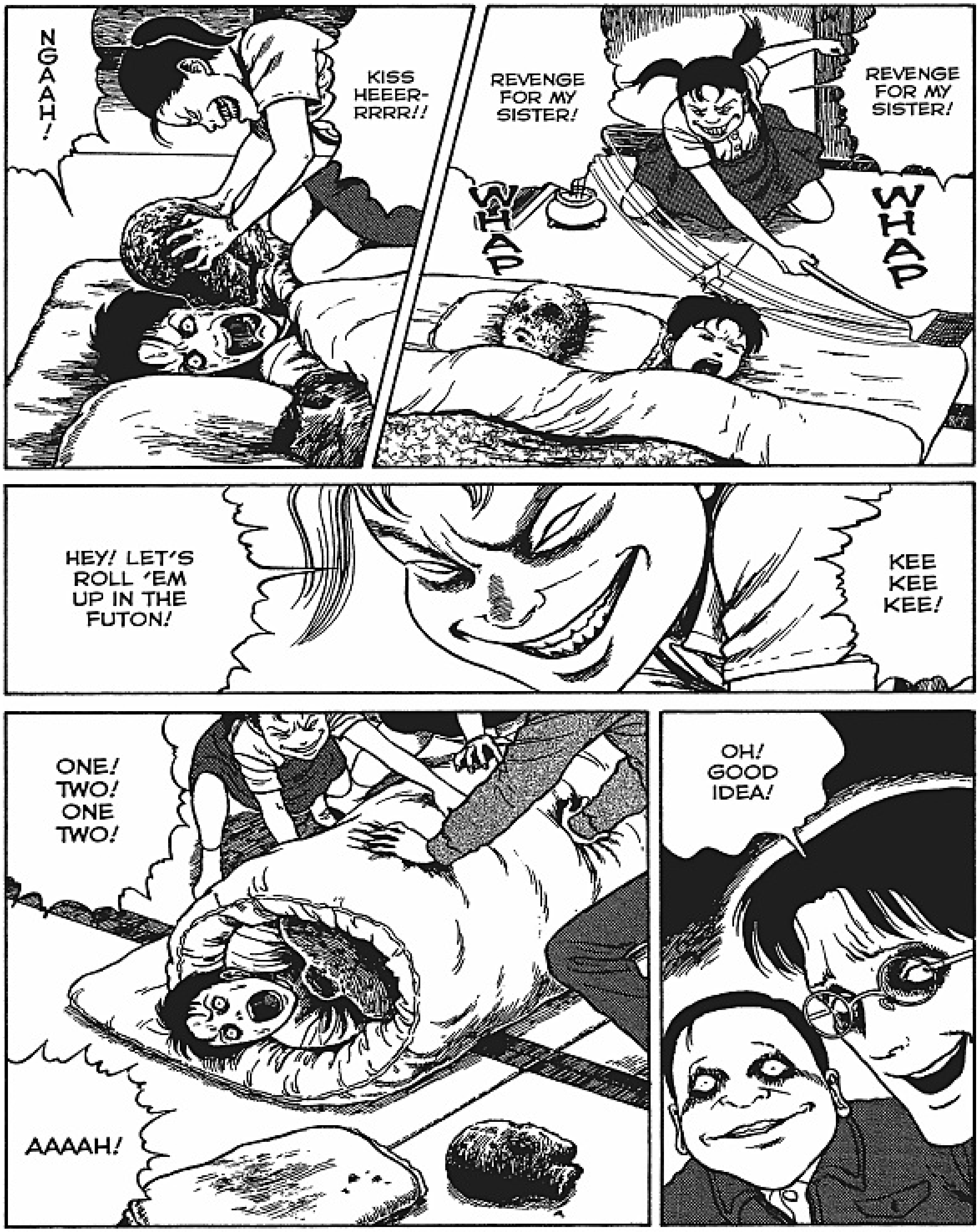

NARUMIIII!
NARUMIIII!
GO ON INSIDE.
WAAAAAH!
WAAAAH!
UNNNH, NARUMIIIIII!

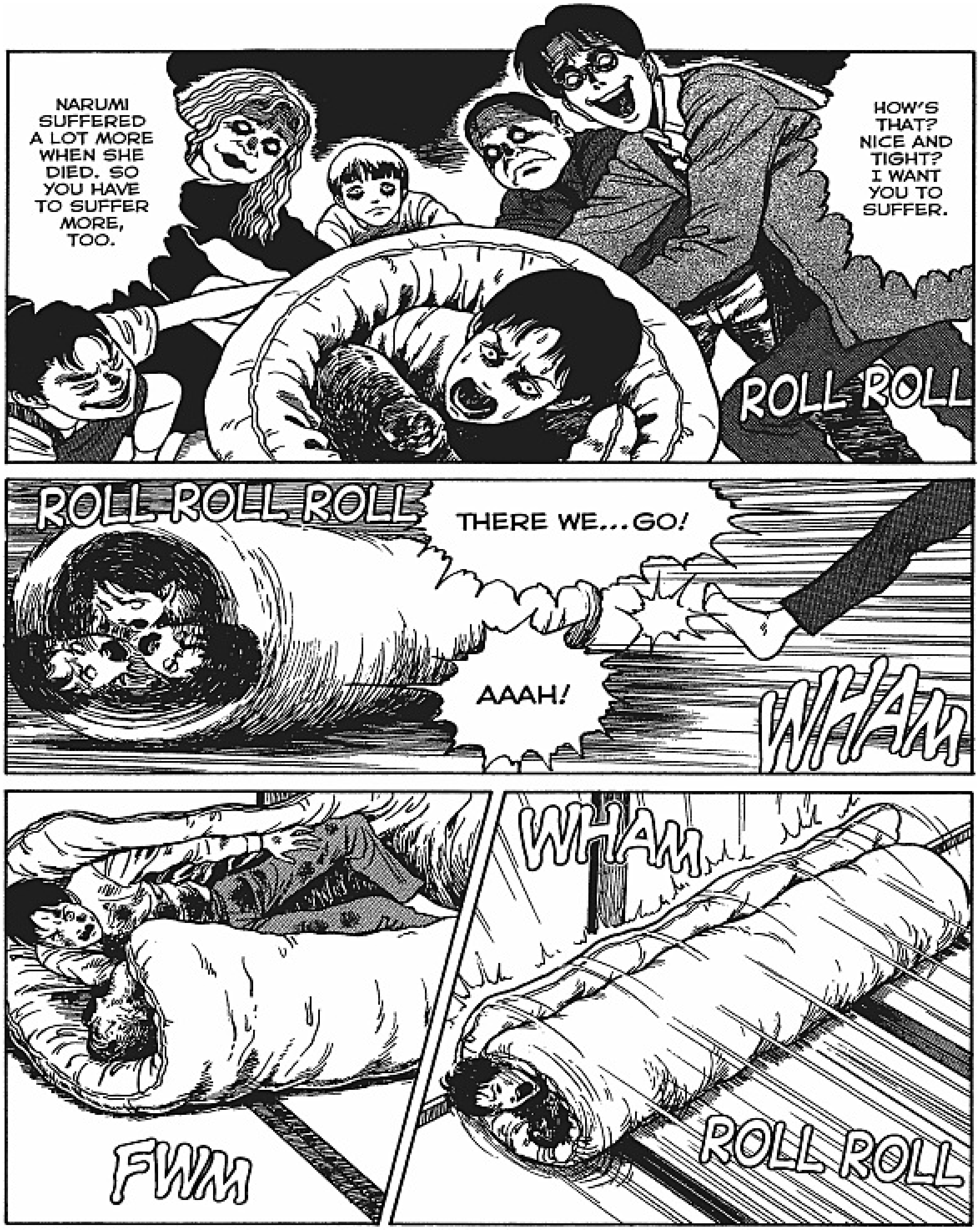

SO YOU'RE KOTANI? QUITE BRAZEN OF YOU TO COME AFTER LEAVING OUR SISTER IN THIS STATE.
KINAKO, SHOW THIS BOY HER FACE.
O-OKAY... SOB SOB...
FSH

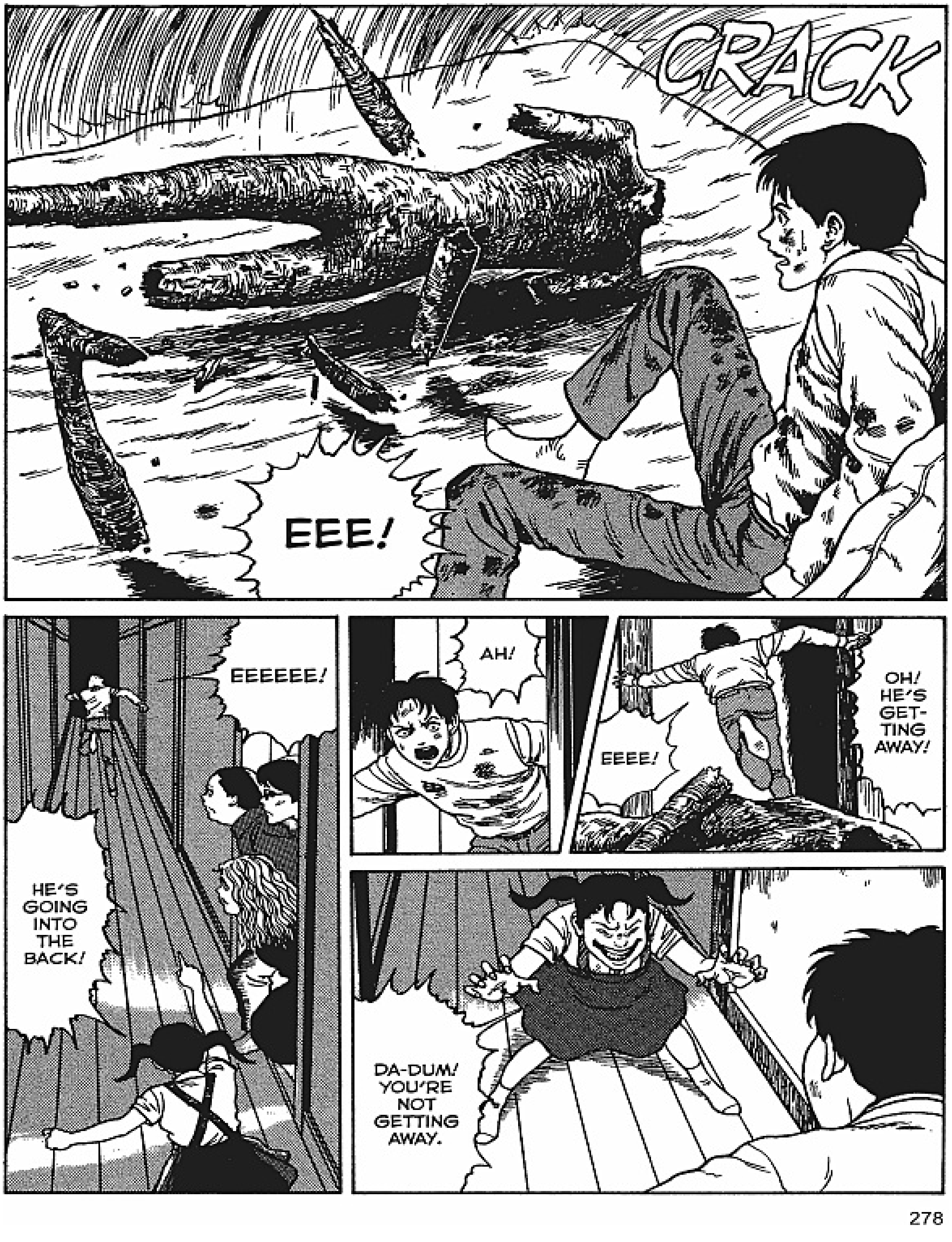

AAAH!
SLUMP
WHD
SHE SET HERSELF ON FIRE.
KOTANI. IT'S YOUR FAULT OUR SISTER IS DEAD. SO WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO ABOUT IT?
W-WHAT *SHOULD* I DO ABOUT IT?
...
WHAT SHOULD YOU DO?
IF YOU REALLY FEEL SORRY, THEN SPEND THE NIGHT WITH NARUMI.
HUH? W-WHAT?
I SAID, GET UNDER THIS FUTON AND STAY WITH HER*!*

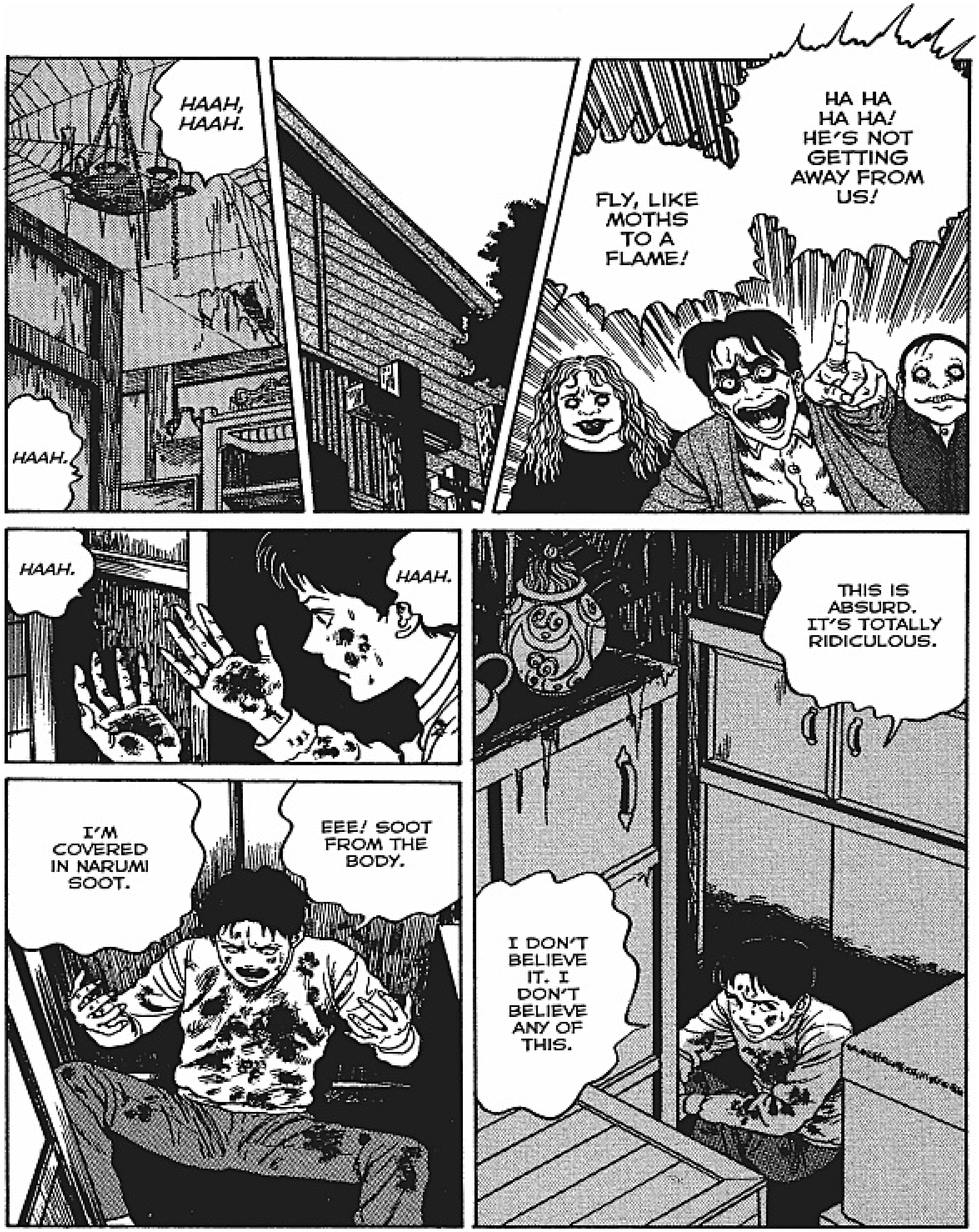

BE GOOD AND GET IN THERE!
AH! PLEASE DON'T!
GO!
YANK
AAAAH!
EEE!
GO, GO!
P-PLEASE FORGIVE ME.
POP
TUMBLE TUMBLE

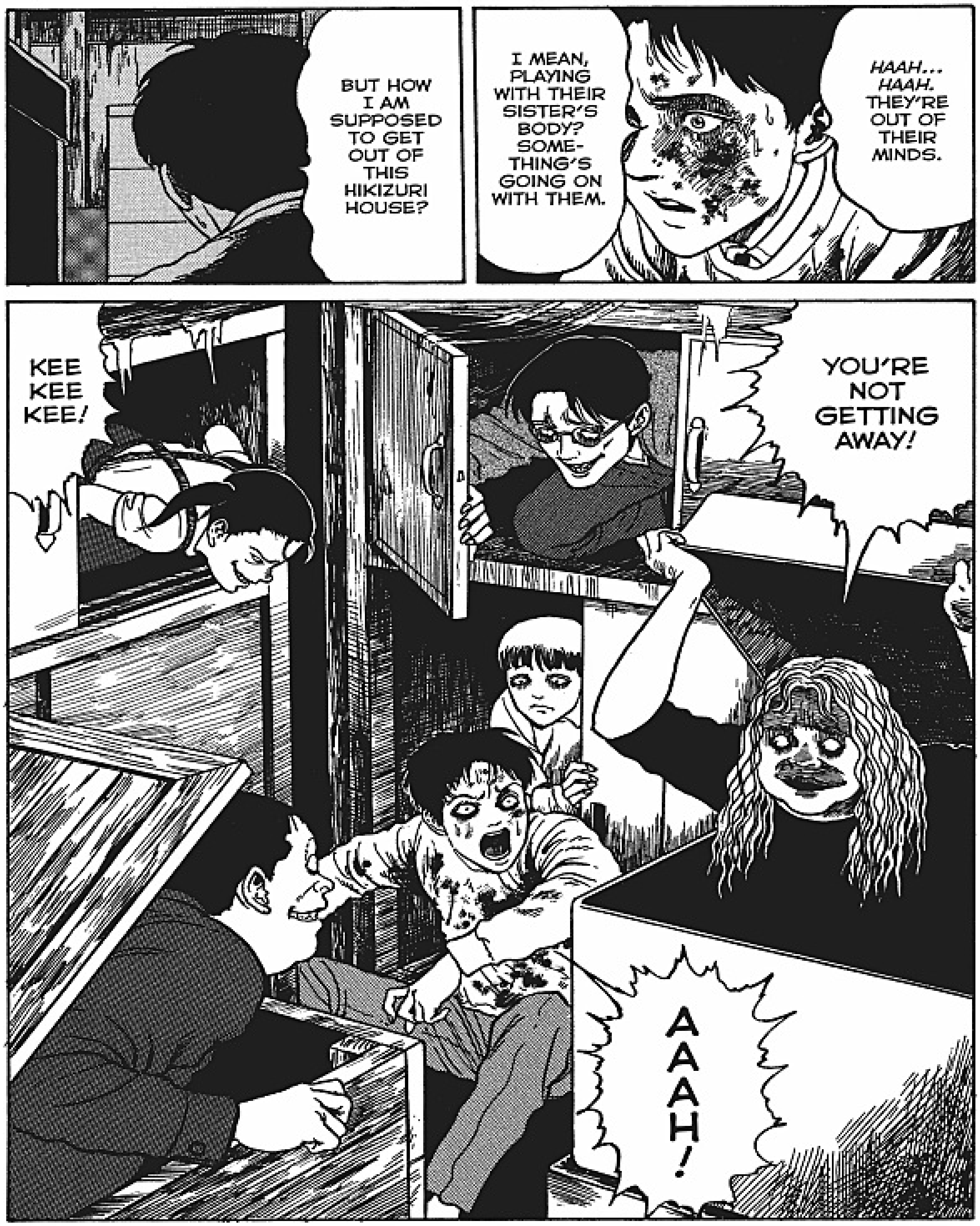

AAAAA-AAAH!
AAAH, HER HEAD CAME OFF. SHE BURNED SO COMPLETELY, SHE TURNED BRITTLE LIKE CHARCOAL.
HITOSHI! PUT HER HEAD BACK ON THE PILLOW.
EEE!
P-PLEASE. FORGIVE ME.
NO... YOU'LL STAY LIKE THAT TONIGHT.

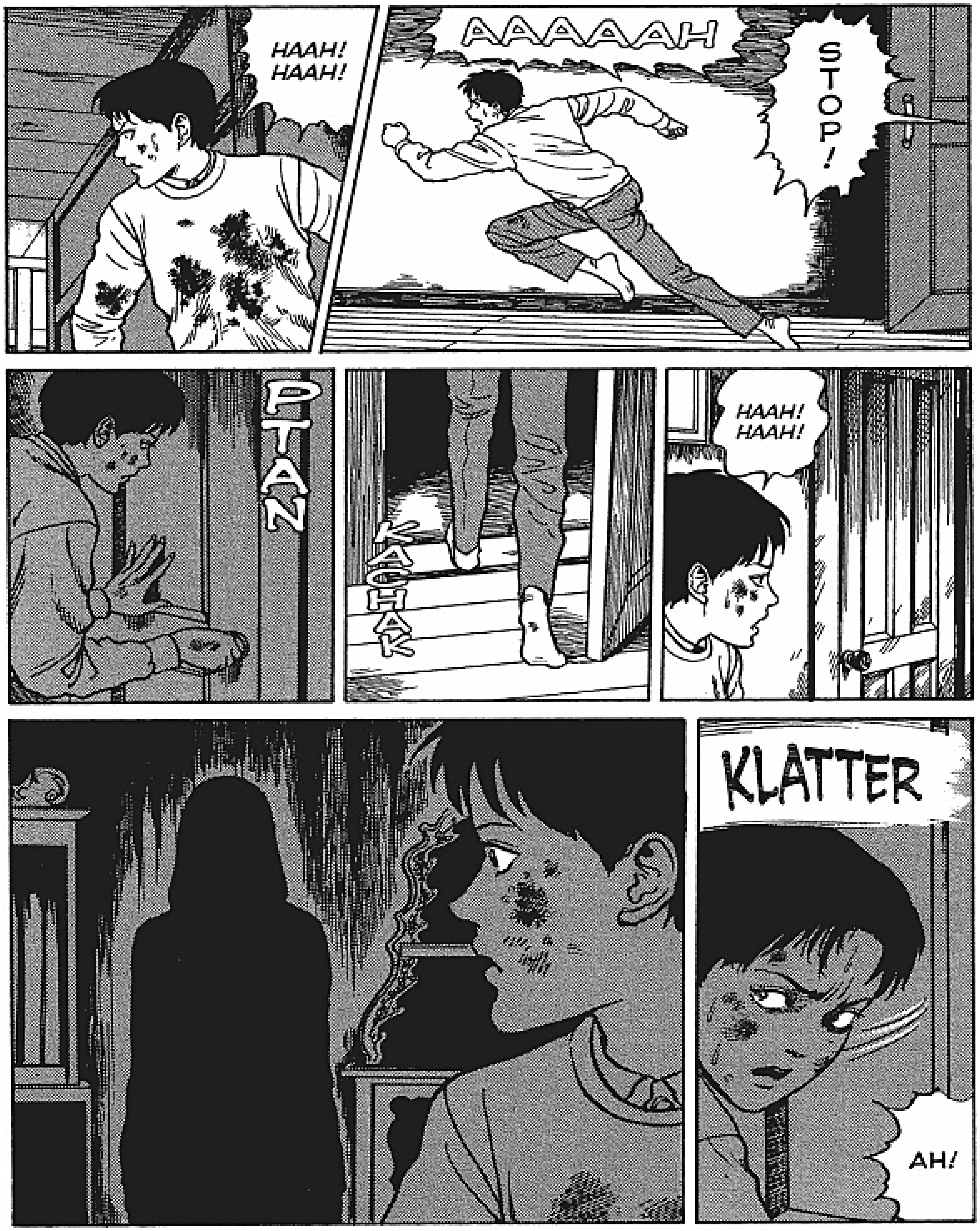

REVENGE FOR MY SISTER!
REVENGE FOR MY SISTER!
WHAP
WHAP
KISS HEEER-RRRR!!
NGAAAH!
KEE KEE KEE!
HEY! LET'S ROLL 'EM UP IN THE FUTON!
OH! GOOD IDEA!
ONE! TWO! ONE TWO!
AAAAH!

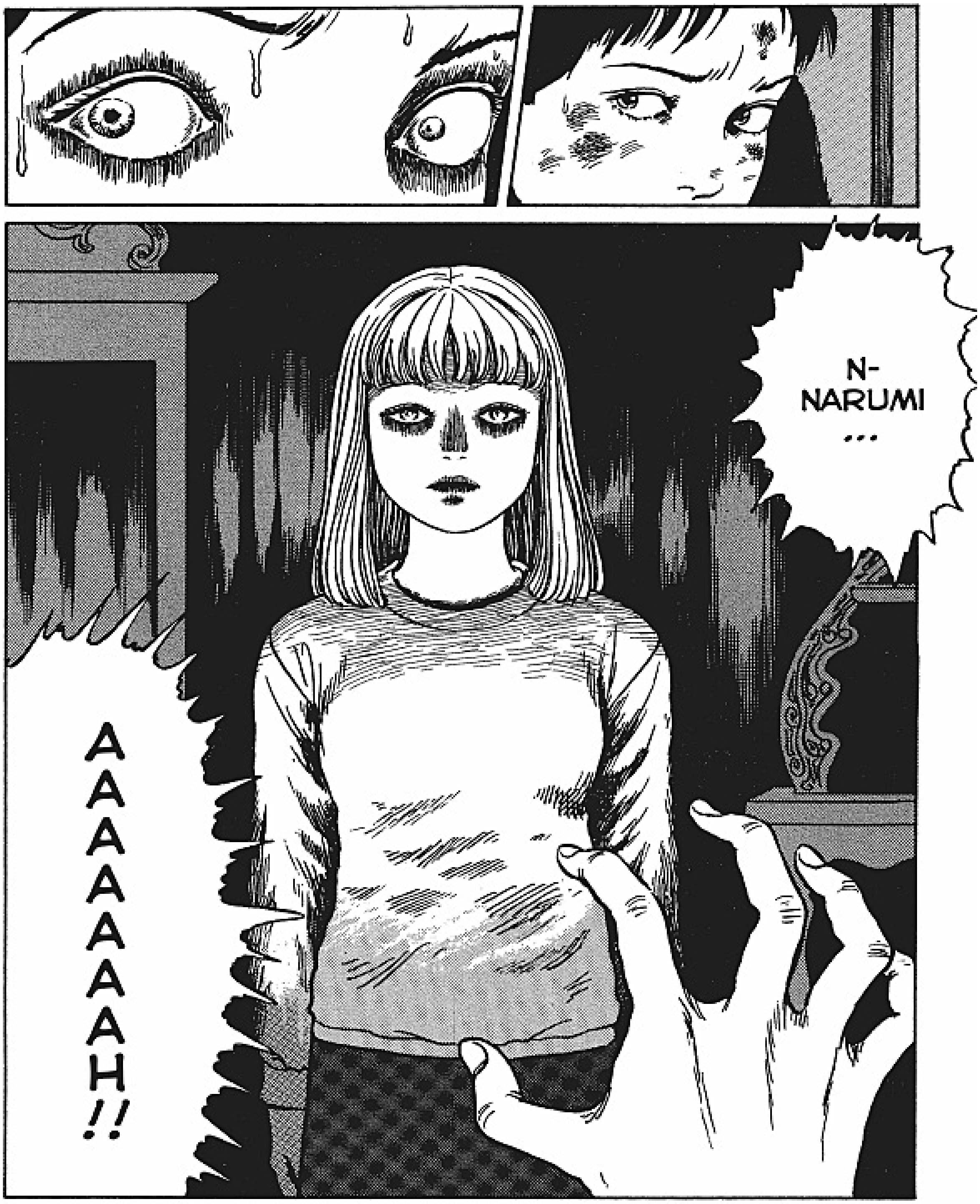

HOW'S THAT? NICE AND TIGHT? I WANT YOU TO SUFFER.
NARUMI SUFFERED A LOT MORE WHEN SHE DIED. SO YOU HAVE TO SUFFER MORE, TOO.
ROLL ROLL
THERE WE...GO!
AAAH!
WHAM
ROLL ROLL ROLL
WHAM
ROLL ROLL
FWM

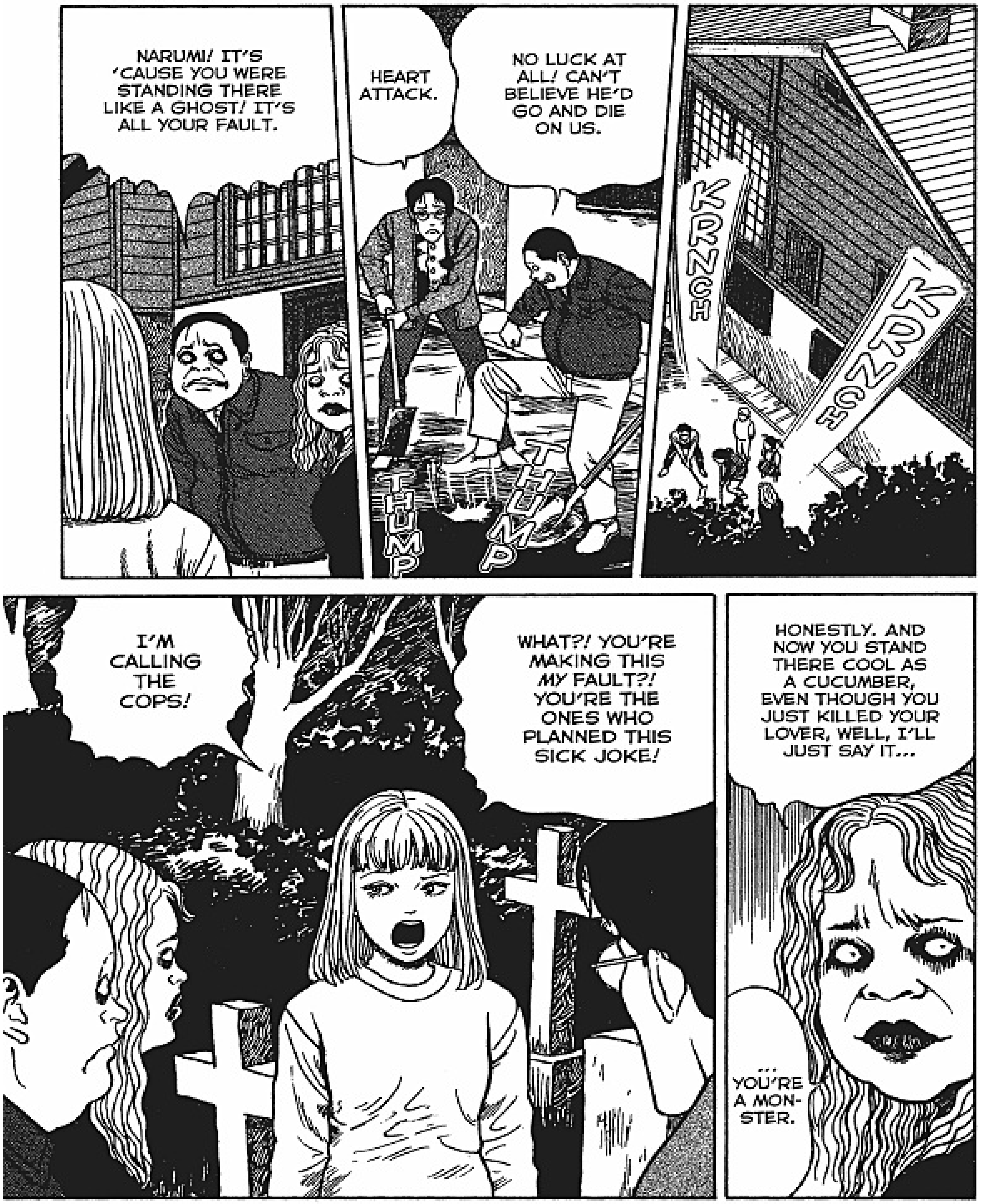

CRACK
EEE!
OH! HE'S GETTING AWAY!
EEEE!
AH!
DA-DUM! YOU'RE NOT GETTING AWAY.
EEEEEE!
HE'S GOING INTO THE BACK!

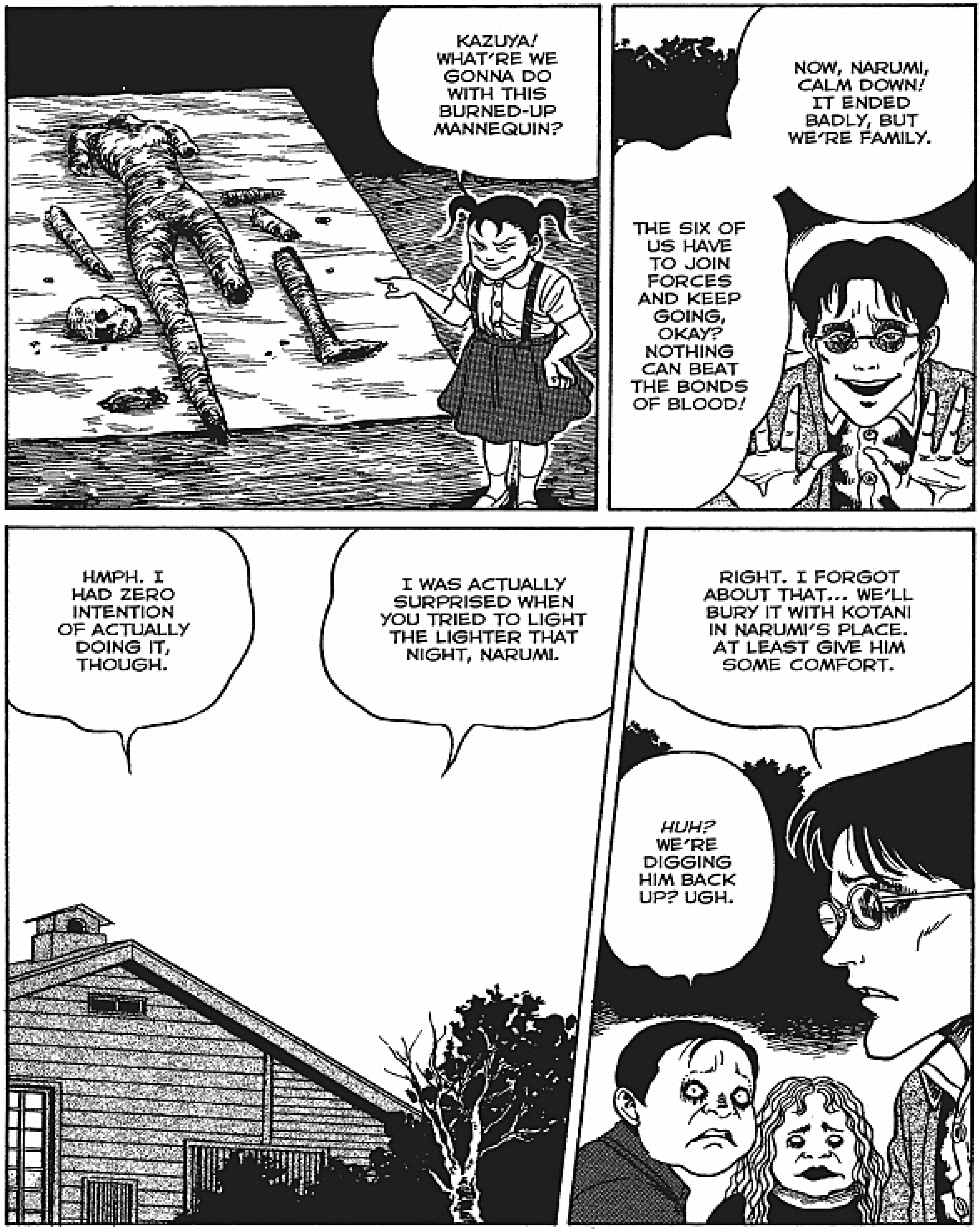

HAAH, HAAH.
HAAH.
FLY, LIKE MOTHS TO A FLAME!
HA HA HA HA! HE'S NOT GETTING AWAY FROM US!
HAAH.
HAAH.
I'M COVERED IN NARUMI SOOT.
EEE! SOOT FROM THE BODY.
THIS IS ABSURD. IT'S TOTALLY RIDICULOUS.
I DON'T BELIEVE IT. I DON'T BELIEVE ANY OF THIS.


HAAH... HAAH. THEY'RE OUT OF THEIR MINDS.
I MEAN, PLAYING WITH THEIR SISTER'S BODY? SOMETHING'S GOING ON WITH THEM.
BUT HOW I AM SUPPOSED TO GET OUT OF THIS HIKIZURI HOUSE?
YOU'RE NOT GETTING AWAY!
KEE KEE KEE!
AAAAH!

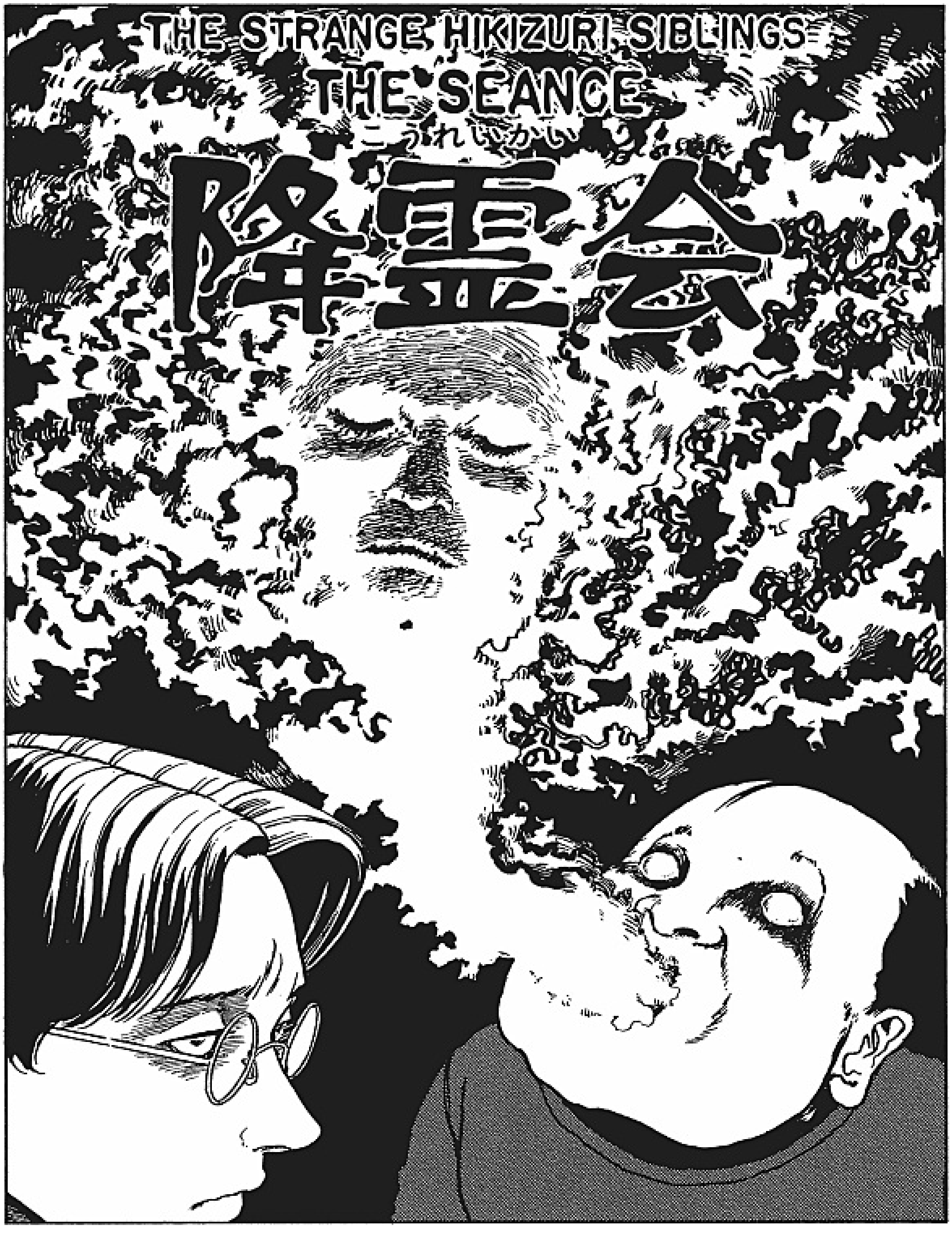

HAAH! HAAH!
AAAAAH
STOP!
PTAN
KACHAK
HAAH! HAAH!
KLATTER
AH!

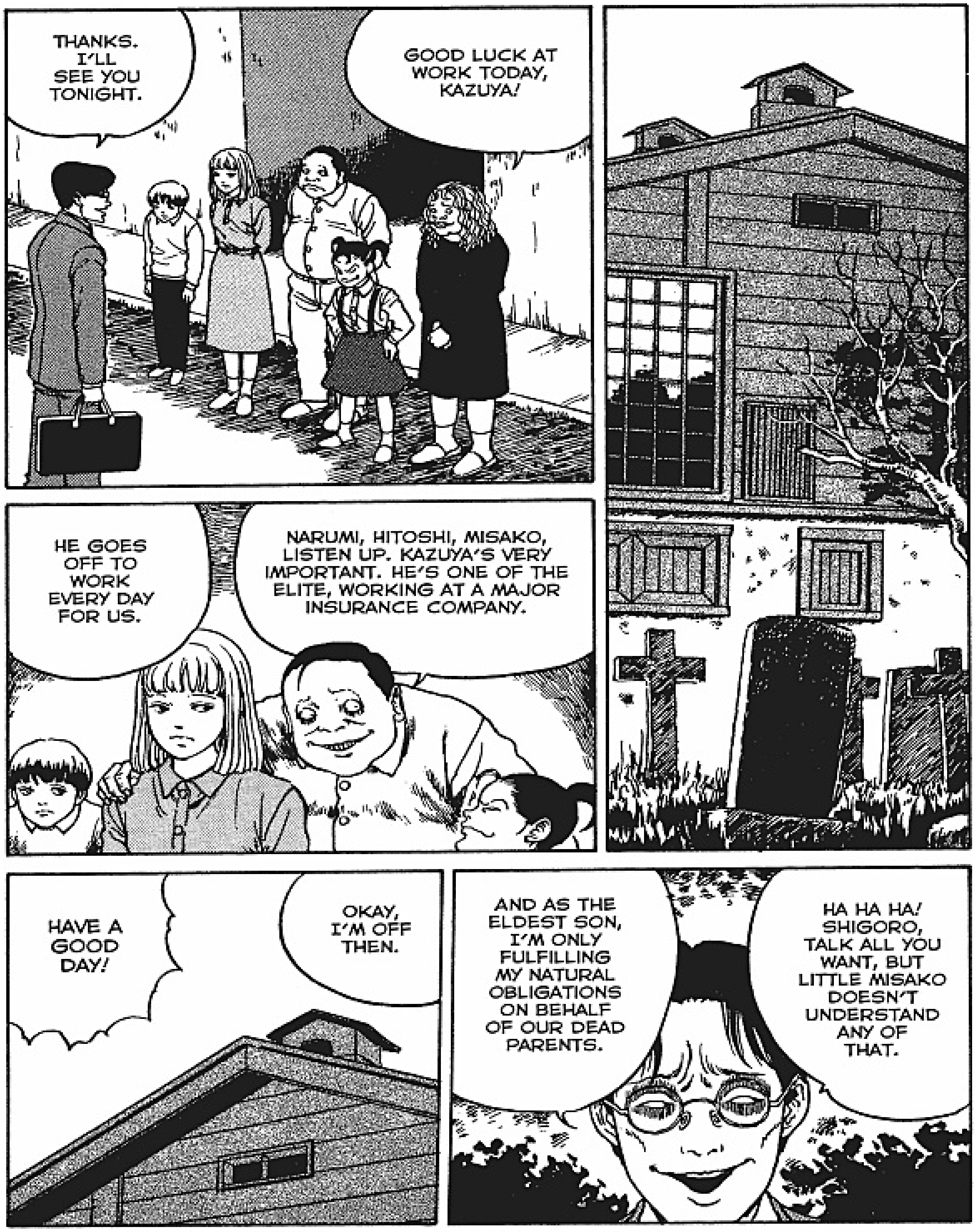

N-
NARUMI
...
AAAAAAAAAH!!

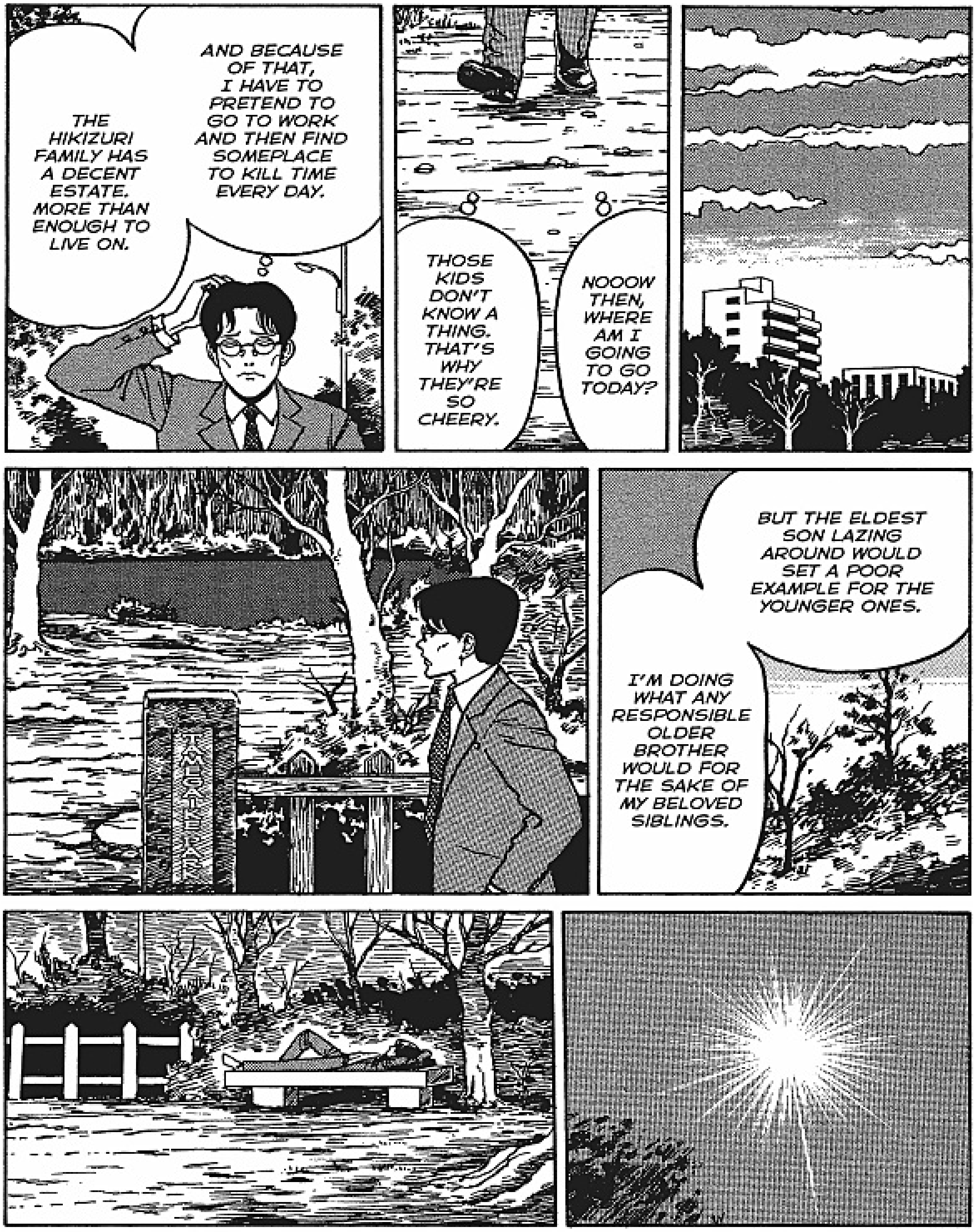

KRNCH
KRNCH
NO LUCK AT ALL! CAN'T BELIEVE HE'D GO AND DIE ON US.
HEART ATTACK.
THUMP
THUMP
NARUMI! IT'S 'CAUSE YOU WERE STANDING THERE LIKE A GHOST! IT'S ALL YOUR FAULT.
HONESTLY. AND NOW YOU STAND THERE COOL AS A CUCUMBER, EVEN THOUGH YOU JUST KILLED YOUR LOVER, WELL, I'LL JUST SAY IT...
...YOU'RE A MONSTER.
WHAT?! YOU'RE MAKING THIS *MY* FAULT?! YOU'RE THE ONES WHO PLANNED THIS SICK JOKE!
I'M CALLING THE COPS!

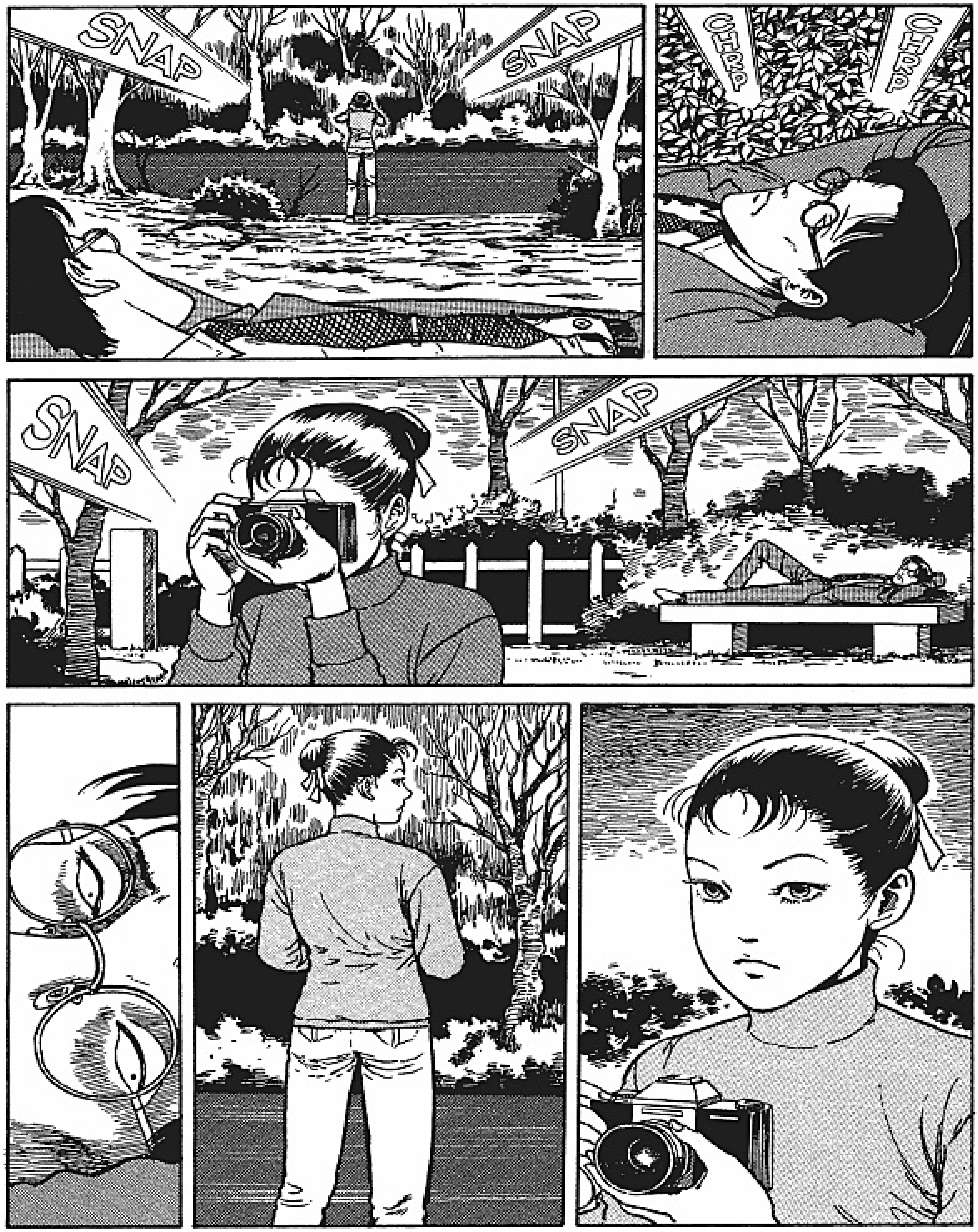

NOW, NARUMI, CALM DOWN! IT ENDED BADLY, BUT WE'RE FAMILY.
THE SIX OF US HAVE TO JOIN FORCES AND KEEP GOING, OKAY? NOTHING CAN BEAT THE BONDS OF BLOOD!
KAZUYA! WHAT'RE WE GONNA DO WITH THIS BURNED-UP MANNEQUIN?
RIGHT. I FORGOT ABOUT THAT... WE'LL BURY IT WITH KOTANI IN NARUMI'S PLACE. AT LEAST GIVE HIM SOME COMFORT.
HUH? WE'RE DIGGING HIM BACK UP? UGH.
I WAS ACTUALLY SURPRISED WHEN YOU TRIED TO LIGHT THE LIGHTER THAT NIGHT, NARUMI.
HMPH. I HAD ZERO INTENTION OF ACTUALLY DOING IT, THOUGH.

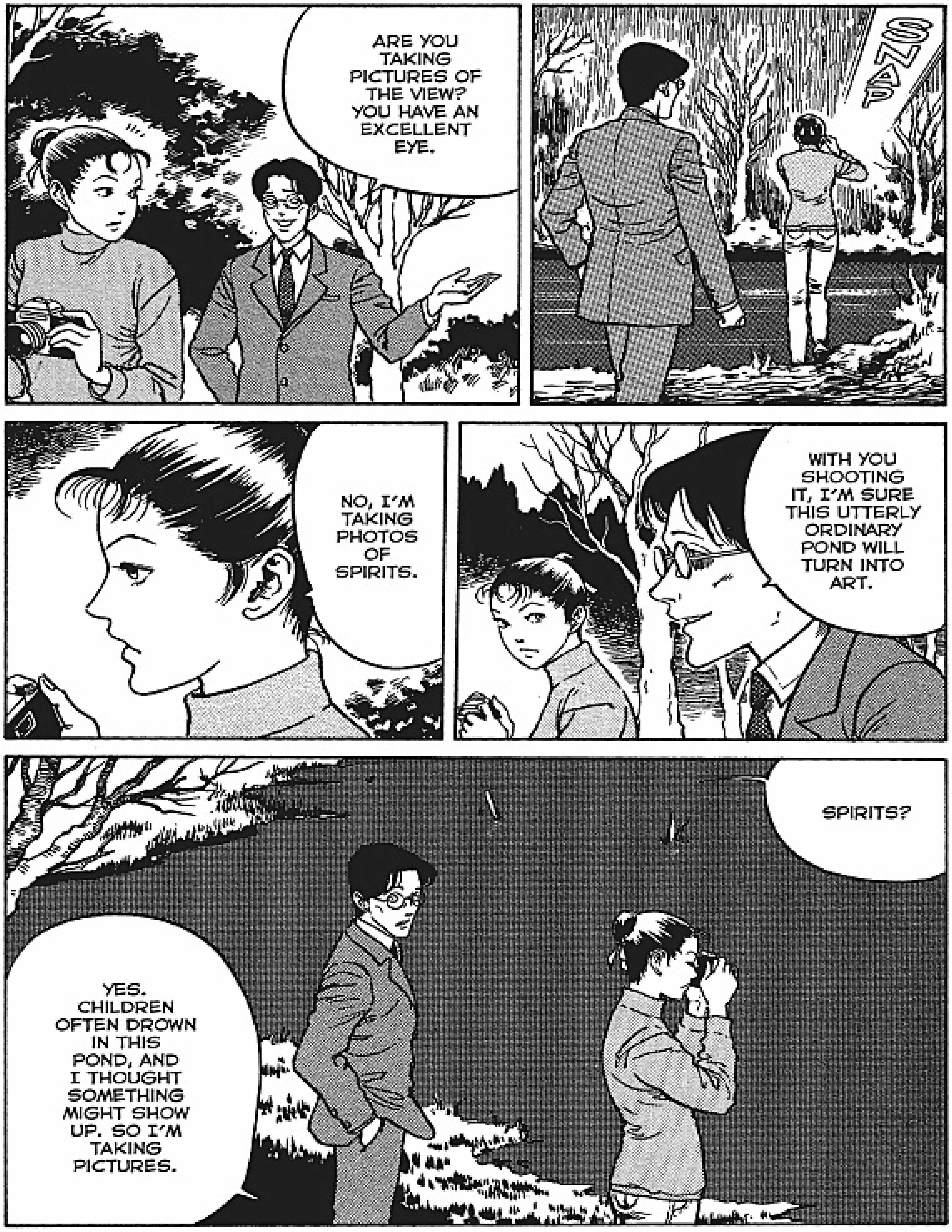
NARUMI'S BOYFRIEND/END

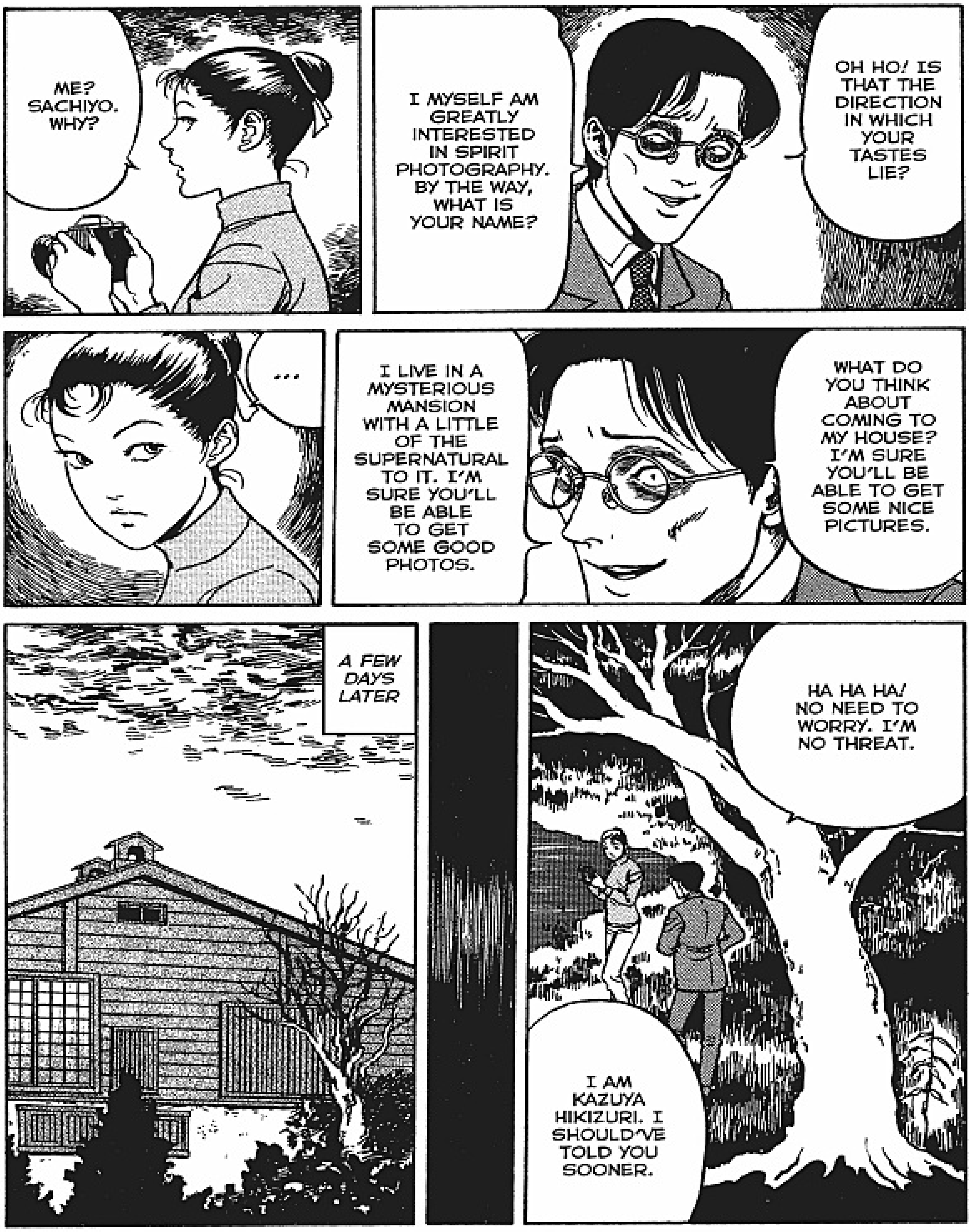

THE STRANGE HIKIZURI SIBLINGS
THE SEANCE
こうれいかい
降霊会

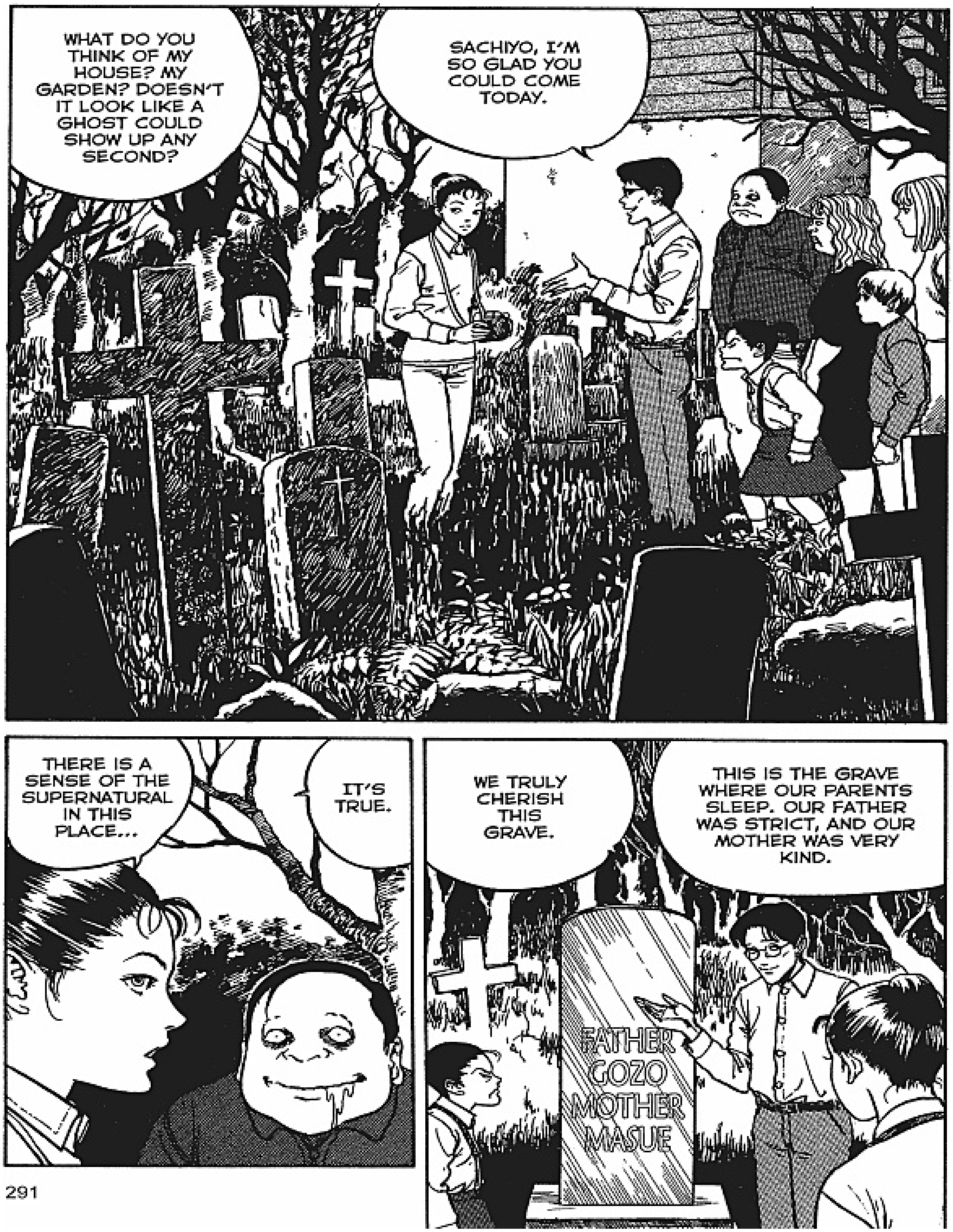

GOOD LUCK AT WORK TODAY, KAZUYA!
THANKS. I'LL SEE YOU TONIGHT.
NARUMI, HITOSHI, MISAKO, LISTEN UP. KAZUYA'S VERY IMPORTANT. HE'S ONE OF THE ELITE, WORKING AT A MAJOR INSURANCE COMPANY.
HE GOES OFF TO WORK EVERY DAY FOR US.
HA HA HA! SHIGORO, TALK ALL YOU WANT, BUT LITTLE MISAKO DOESN'T UNDERSTAND ANY OF THAT.
AND AS THE ELDEST SON, I'M ONLY FULFILLING MY NATURAL OBLIGATIONS ON BEHALF OF OUR DEAD PARENTS.
OKAY, I'M OFF THEN.
HAVE A GOOD DAY!

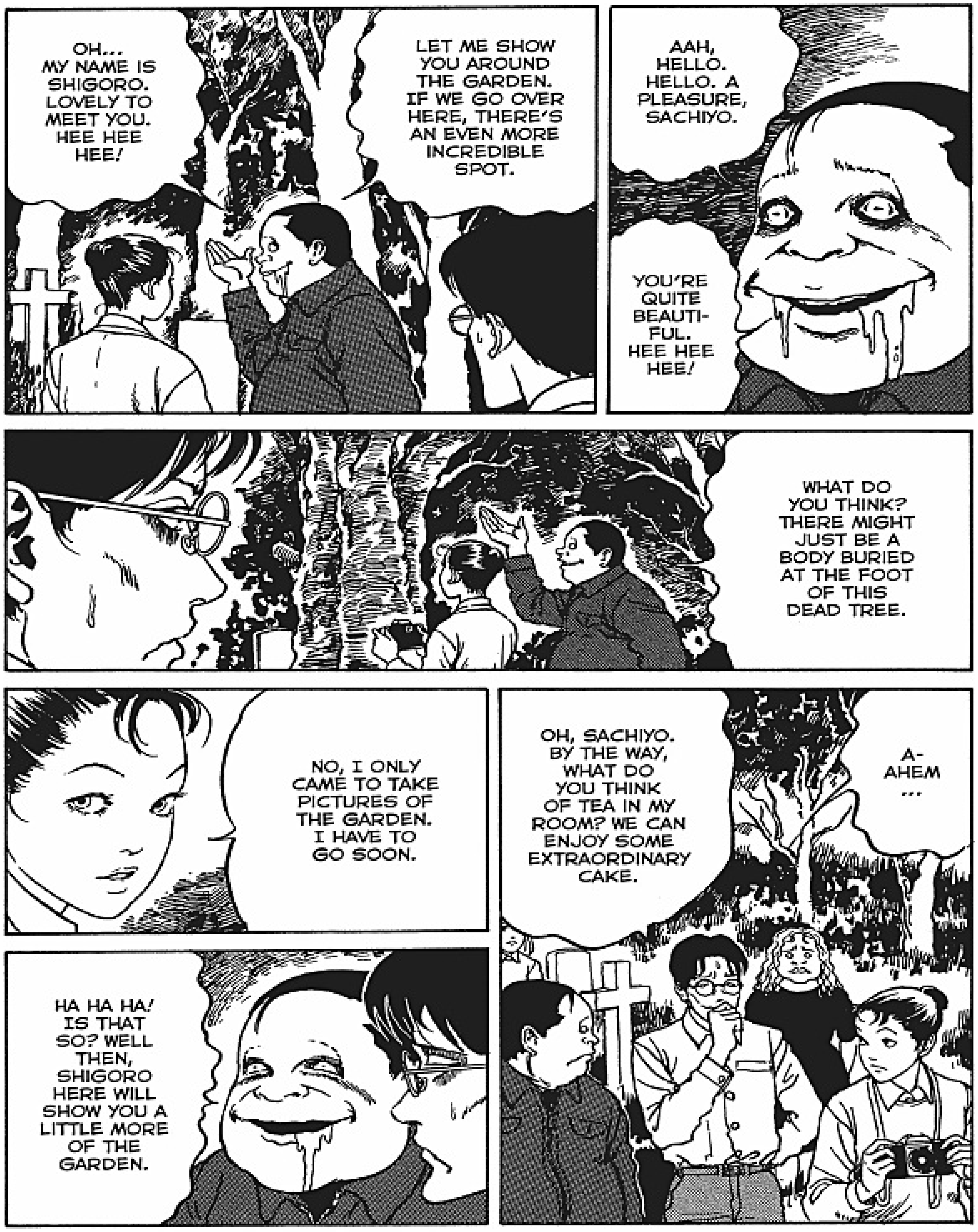

THE HIKIZURI FAMILY HAS A DECENT ESTATE. MORE THAN ENOUGH TO LIVE ON.
AND BECAUSE OF THAT, I HAVE TO PRETEND TO GO TO WORK AND THEN FIND SOMEPLACE TO KILL TIME EVERY DAY.
THOSE KIDS DON'T KNOW A THING. THAT'S WHY THEY'RE SO CHEERY.
NOOOW THEN, WHERE AM I GOING TO GO TODAY?
BUT THE ELDEST SON LAZING AROUND WOULD SET A POOR EXAMPLE FOR THE YOUNGER ONES.
I'M DOING WHAT ANY RESPONSIBLE OLDER BROTHER WOULD FOR THE SAKE OF MY BELOVED SIBLINGS.

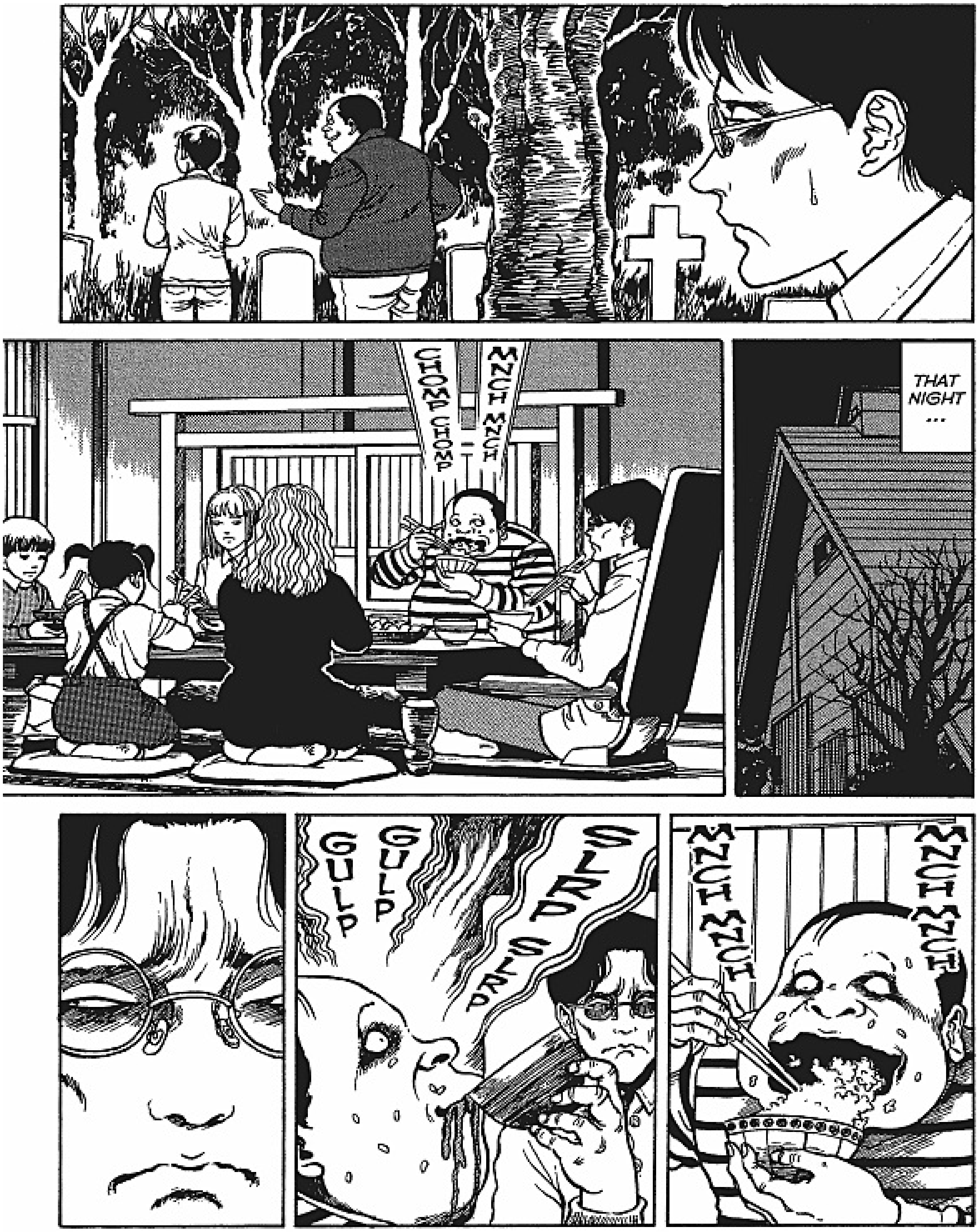

SNAP
SNAP
CHIRP
CHIRP
SNAP
SNAP

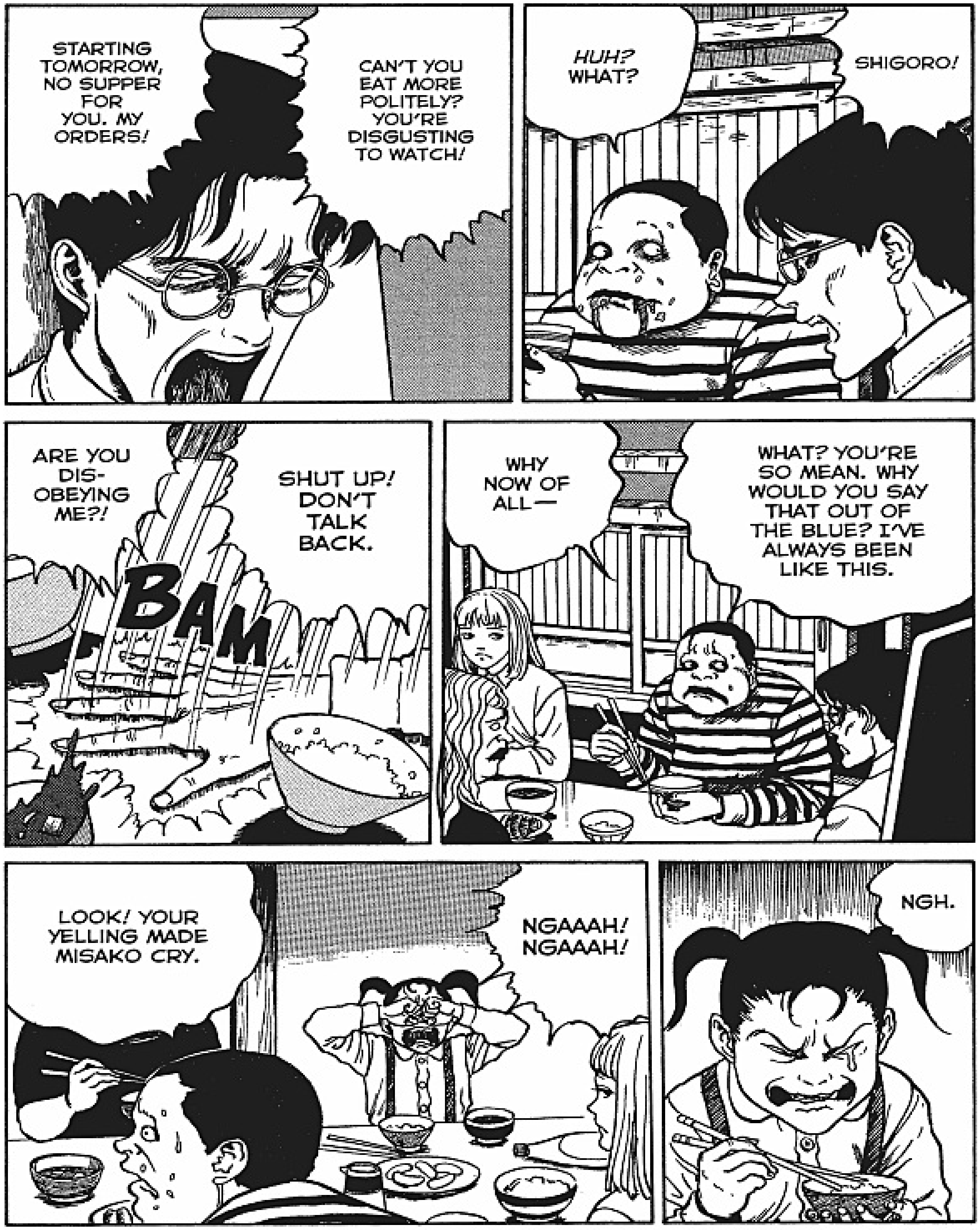

SNAP
ARE YOU TAKING PICTURES OF THE VIEW? YOU HAVE AN EXCELLENT EYE.
WITH YOU SHOOTING IT, I'M SURE THIS UTTERLY ORDINARY POND WILL TURN INTO ART.
NO, I'M TAKING PHOTOS OF SPIRITS.
SPIRITS?
YES. CHILDREN OFTEN DROWN IN THIS POND, AND I THOUGHT SOMETHING MIGHT SHOW UP. SO I'M TAKING PICTURES.

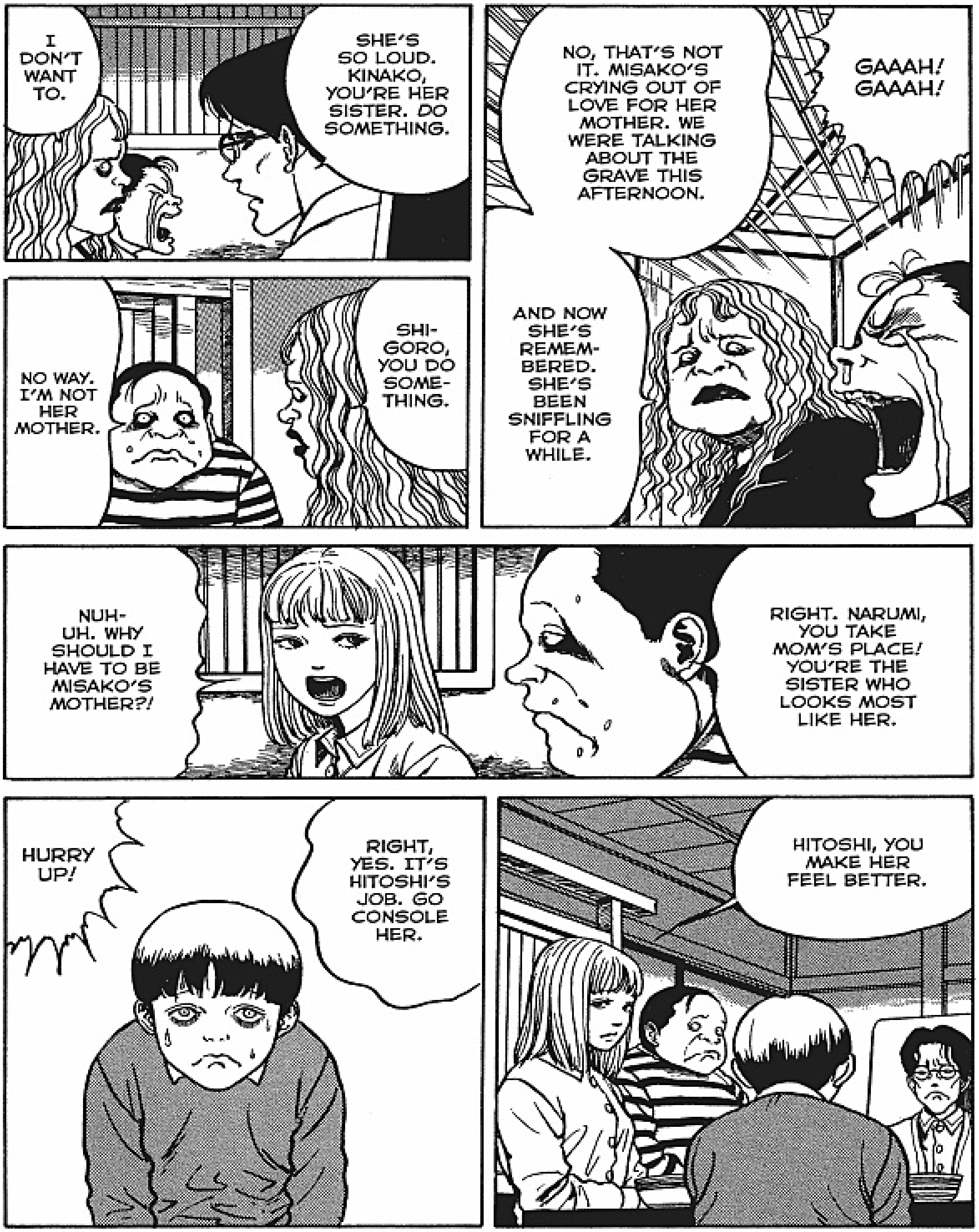

OH HO! IS THAT THE DIRECTION IN WHICH YOUR TASTES LIE?
I MYSELF AM GREATLY INTERESTED IN SPIRIT PHOTOGRAPHY. BY THE WAY, WHAT IS YOUR NAME?
ME? SACHIYO. WHY?
WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT COMING TO MY HOUSE? I'M SURE YOU'LL BE ABLE TO GET SOME NICE PICTURES.
I LIVE IN A MYSTERIOUS MANSION WITH A LITTLE OF THE SUPERNATURAL TO IT. I'M SURE YOU'LL BE ABLE TO GET SOME GOOD PHOTOS.
...
HA HA HA! NO NEED TO WORRY. I'M NO THREAT.
I AM KAZUYA HIKIZURI. I SHOULD'VE TOLD YOU SOONER.
A FEW DAYS LATER

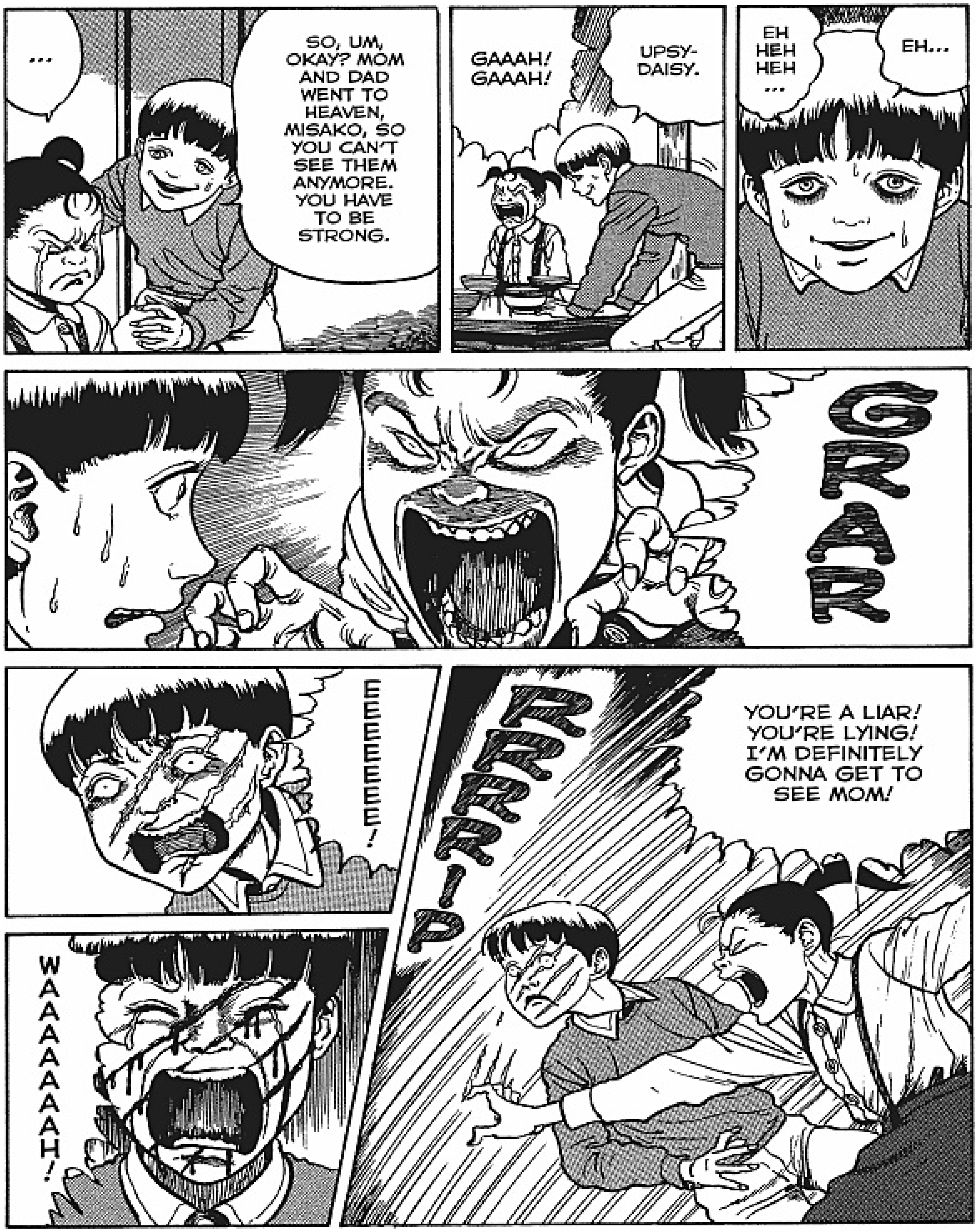

SACHIYO, I'M SO GLAD YOU COULD COME TODAY.
WHAT DO YOU THINK OF MY HOUSE? MY GARDEN? DOESN'T IT LOOK LIKE A GHOST COULD SHOW UP ANY SECOND?
THIS IS THE GRAVE WHERE OUR PARENTS SLEEP. OUR FATHER WAS STRICT, AND OUR MOTHER WAS VERY KIND.
WE TRULY CHERISH THIS GRAVE.
FATHER GOZO MOTHER MASUE
THERE IS A SENSE OF THE SUPERNATURAL IN THIS PLACE...
IT'S TRUE.

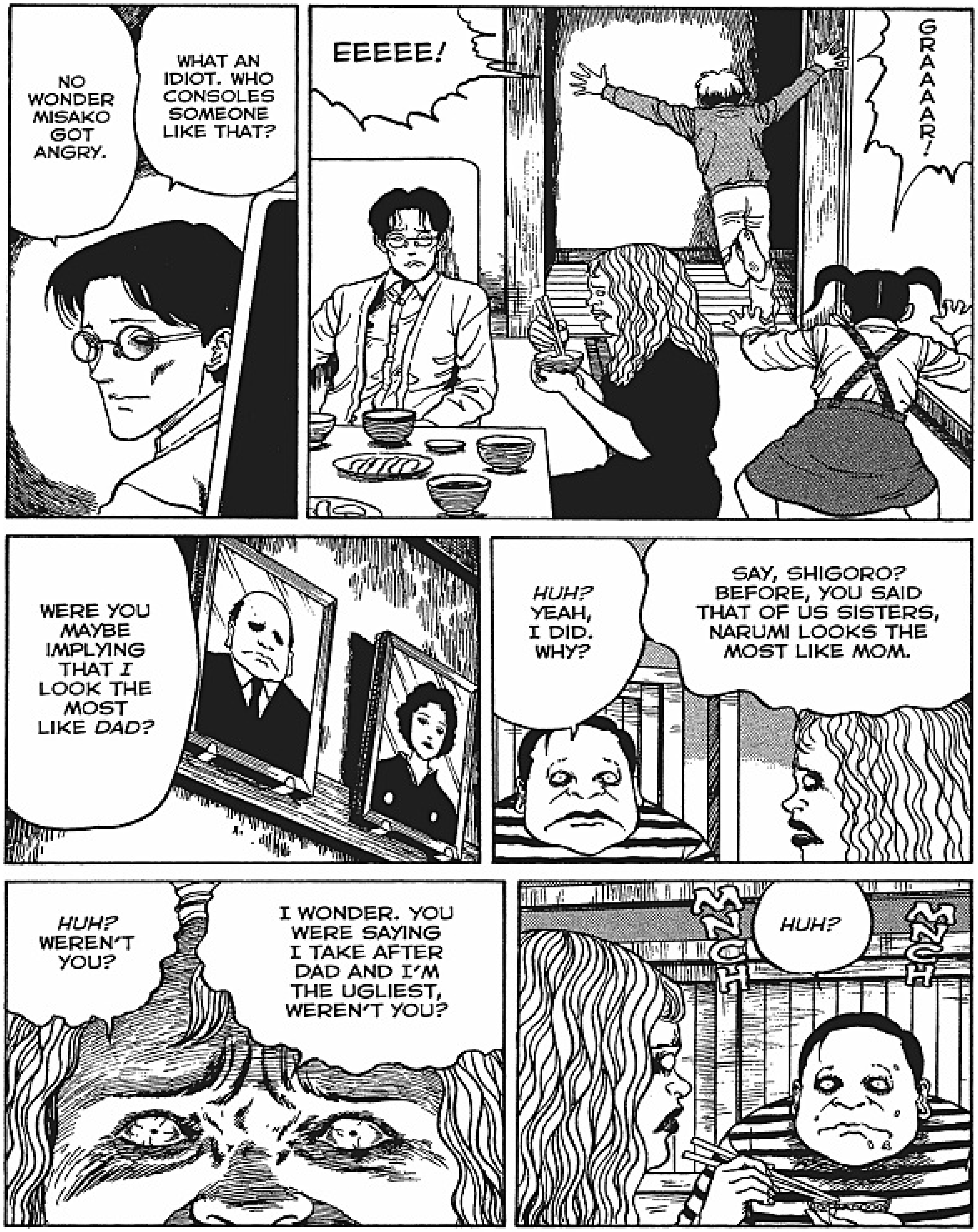

OH... MY NAME IS SHIGORO. LOVELY TO MEET YOU. HEE HEE HEE!
LET ME SHOW YOU AROUND THE GARDEN. IF WE GO OVER HERE, THERE'S AN EVEN MORE INCREDIBLE SPOT.
AAH, HELLO. HELLO. A PLEASURE, SACHIYO.
YOU'RE QUITE BEAUTIFUL. HEE HEE HEE!
WHAT DO YOU THINK? THERE MIGHT JUST BE A BODY BURIED AT THE FOOT OF THIS DEAD TREE.
NO, I ONLY CAME TO TAKE PICTURES OF THE GARDEN. I HAVE TO GO SOON.
HA HA HA! IS THAT SO? WELL THEN, SHIGORO HERE WILL SHOW YOU A LITTLE MORE OF THE GARDEN.
OH, SACHIYO. BY THE WAY, WHAT DO YOU THINK OF TEA IN MY ROOM? WE CAN ENJOY SOME EXTRAORDINARY CAKE.
A-AHEM ...

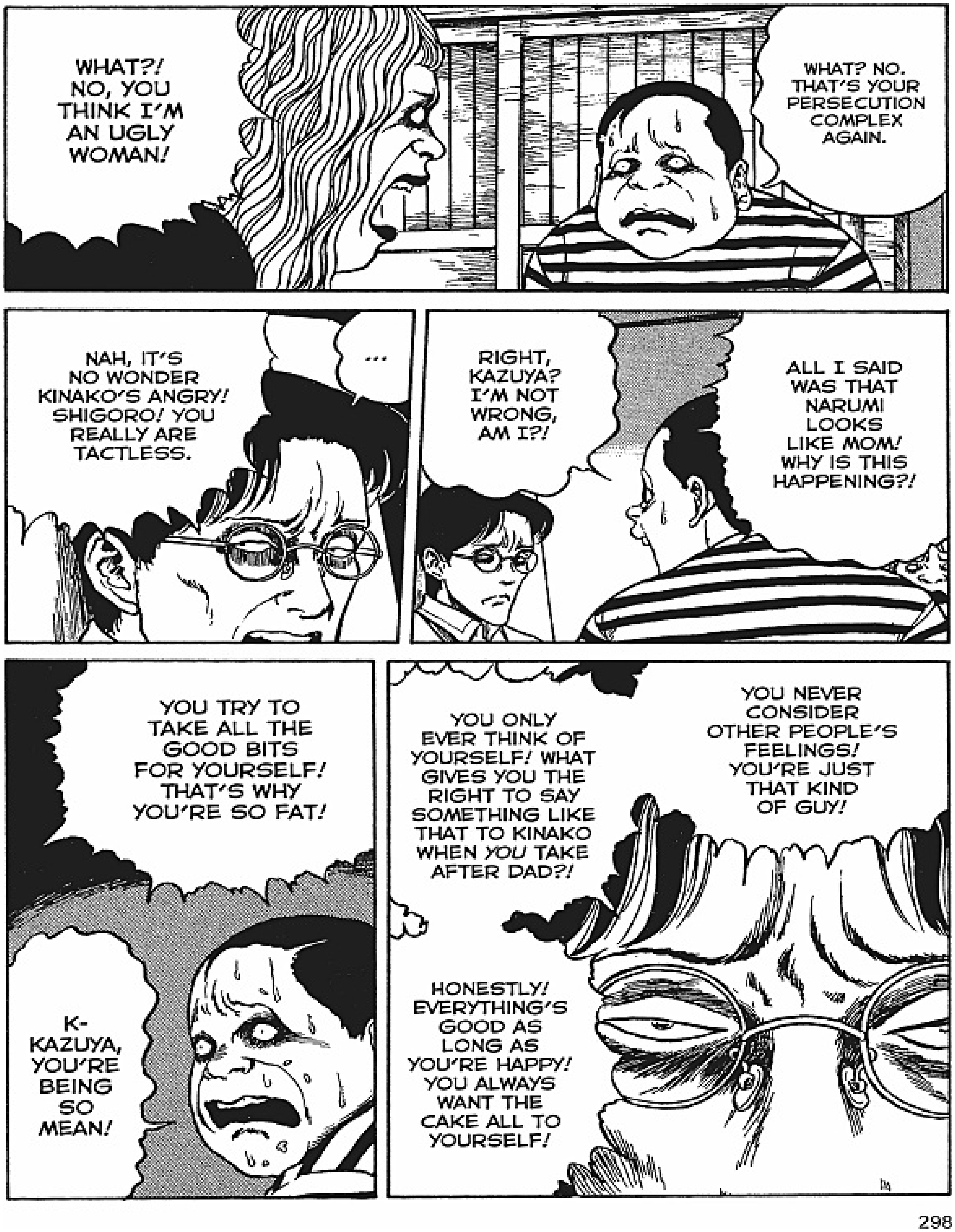

THAT NIGHT...
MNCH MNCH
CHOMP CHOMP
MNCH MNCH
MNCH MNCH
SLRP SLRP
GULP GULP

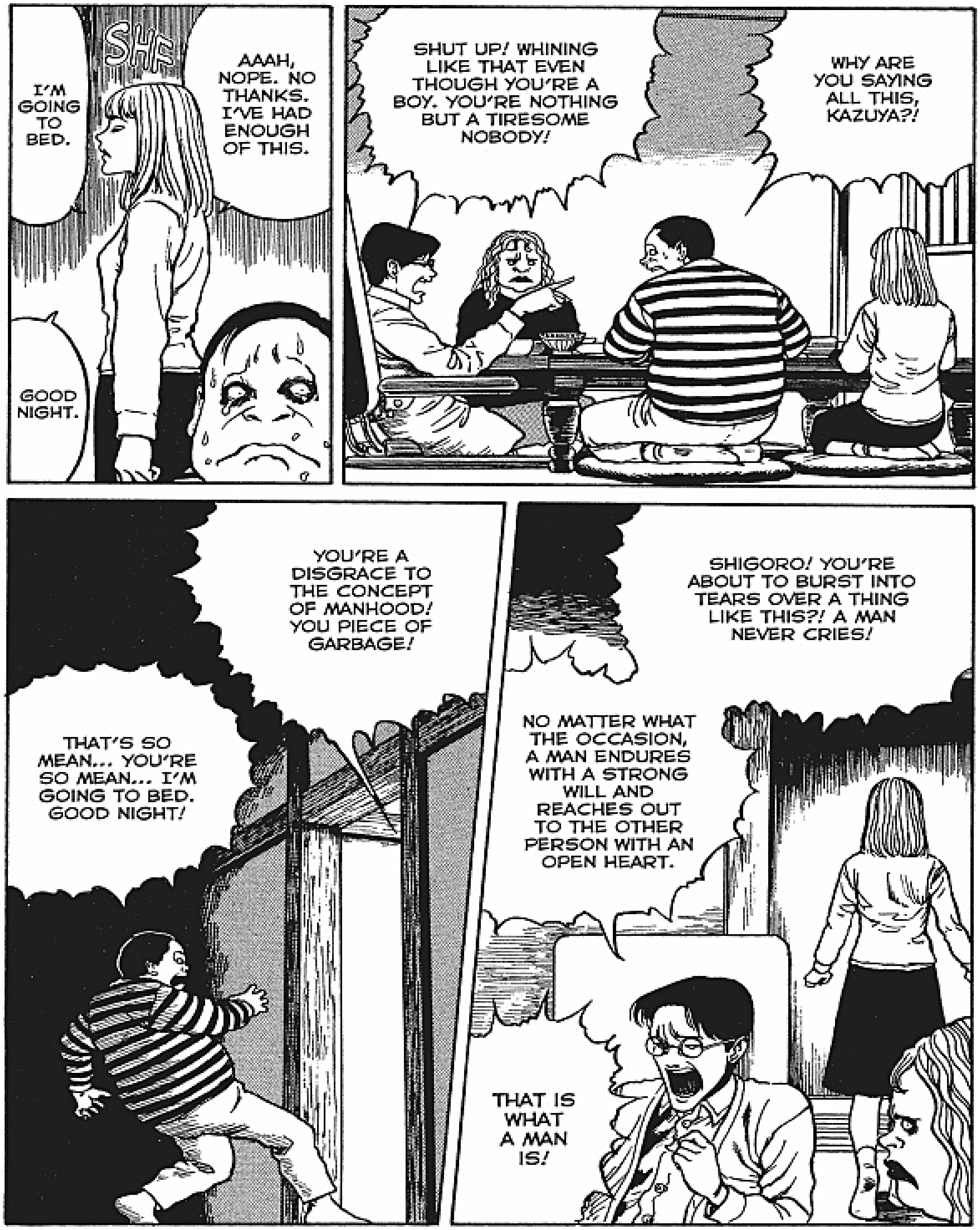

SHIGORO!
HUH? WHAT?
CAN'T YOU EAT MORE POLITELY? YOU'RE DISGUSTING TO WATCH!
STARTING TOMORROW, NO SUPPER FOR YOU. MY ORDERS!
WHAT? YOU'RE SO MEAN. WHY WOULD YOU SAY THAT OUT OF THE BLUE? I'VE ALWAYS BEEN LIKE THIS.
WHY NOW OF ALL—
SHUT UP! DON'T TALK BACK.
BAM
ARE YOU DIS-OBEYING ME?!
NGH.
NGAAAH! NGAAAH!
LOOK! YOUR YELLING MADE MISAKO CRY.

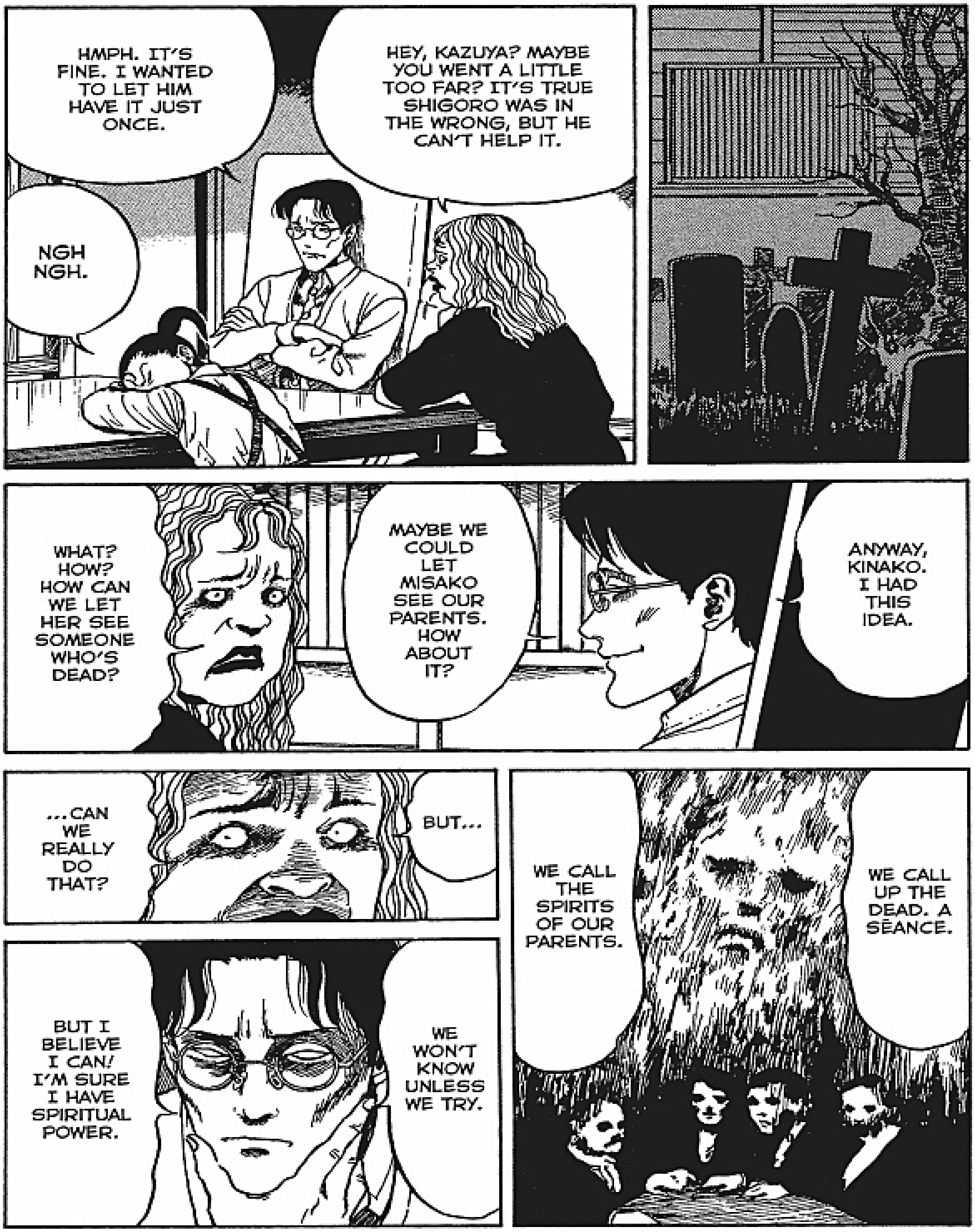

GAAAH! GAAAH!
NO, THAT'S NOT IT. MISAKO'S CRYING OUT OF LOVE FOR HER MOTHER. WE WERE TALKING ABOUT THE GRAVE THIS AFTERNOON.
AND NOW SHE'S REMEMBERED. SHE'S BEEN SNIFFLING FOR A WHILE.
SHE'S SO LOUD. KINAKO, YOU'RE HER SISTER. *DO* SOMETHING.
I DON'T WANT TO.
SHIGORO, YOU DO SOMETHING.
NO WAY. I'M NOT HER MOTHER.
RIGHT. NARUMI, YOU TAKE MOM'S PLACE! YOU'RE THE SISTER WHO LOOKS MOST LIKE HER.
NUH-UH. WHY SHOULD I HAVE TO BE MISAKO'S MOTHER?!
HITOSHI, YOU MAKE HER FEEL BETTER.
RIGHT, YES. IT'S HITOSHI'S JOB. GO CONSOLE HER.
HURRY UP!

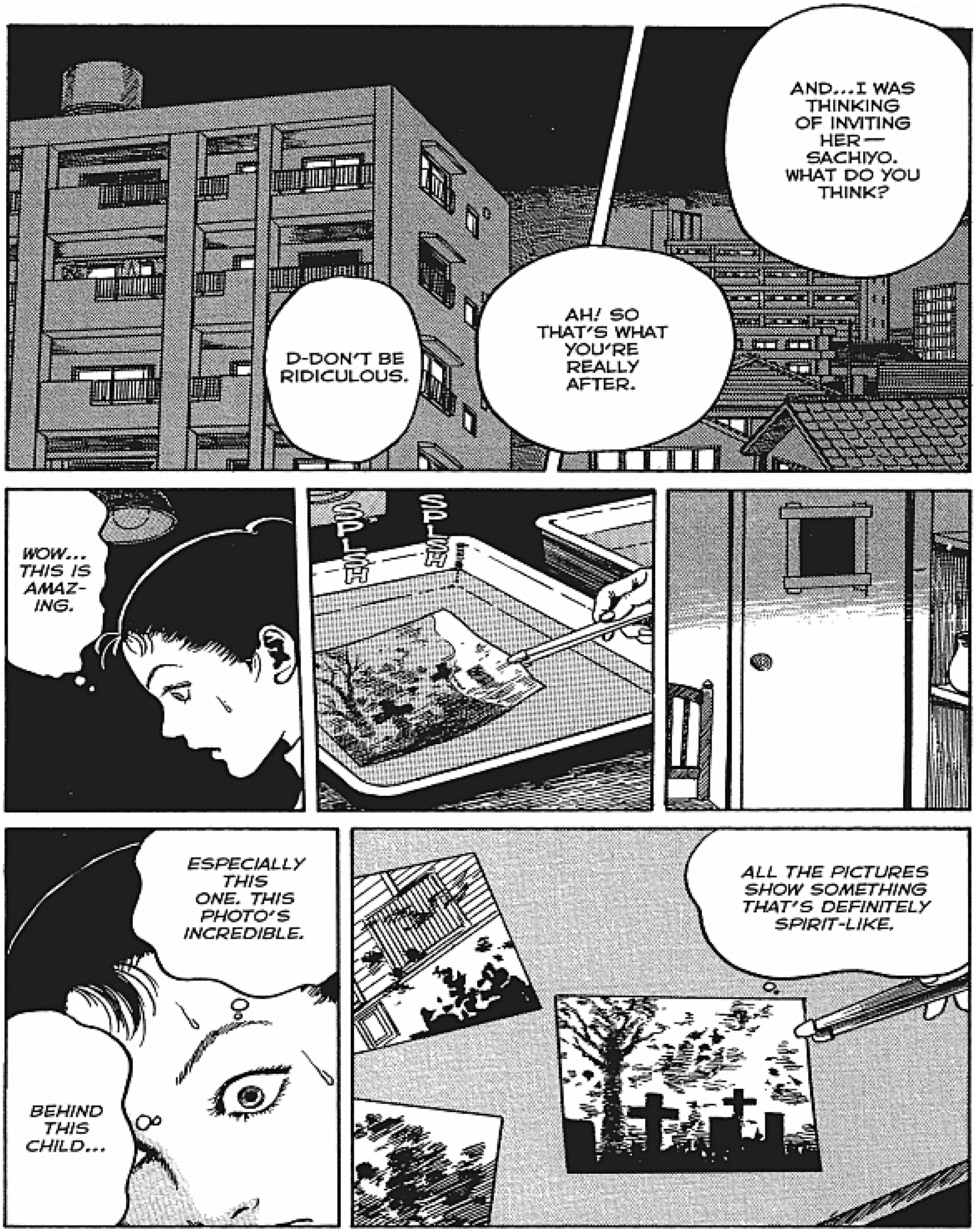

EH...
EH HEH HEH ...
UPSY-DAISY.
GAAAH! GAAAH!
SO, UM, OKAY? MOM AND DAD WENT TO HEAVEN, MISAKO, SO YOU CAN'T SEE THEM ANYMORE. YOU HAVE TO BE STRONG.
...
GRAR
YOU'RE A LIAR! YOU'RE LYING! I'M DEFINITELY GONNA GET TO SEE MOM!
RRRRIP
EEEEEEE!
WAAAAAAAAH!

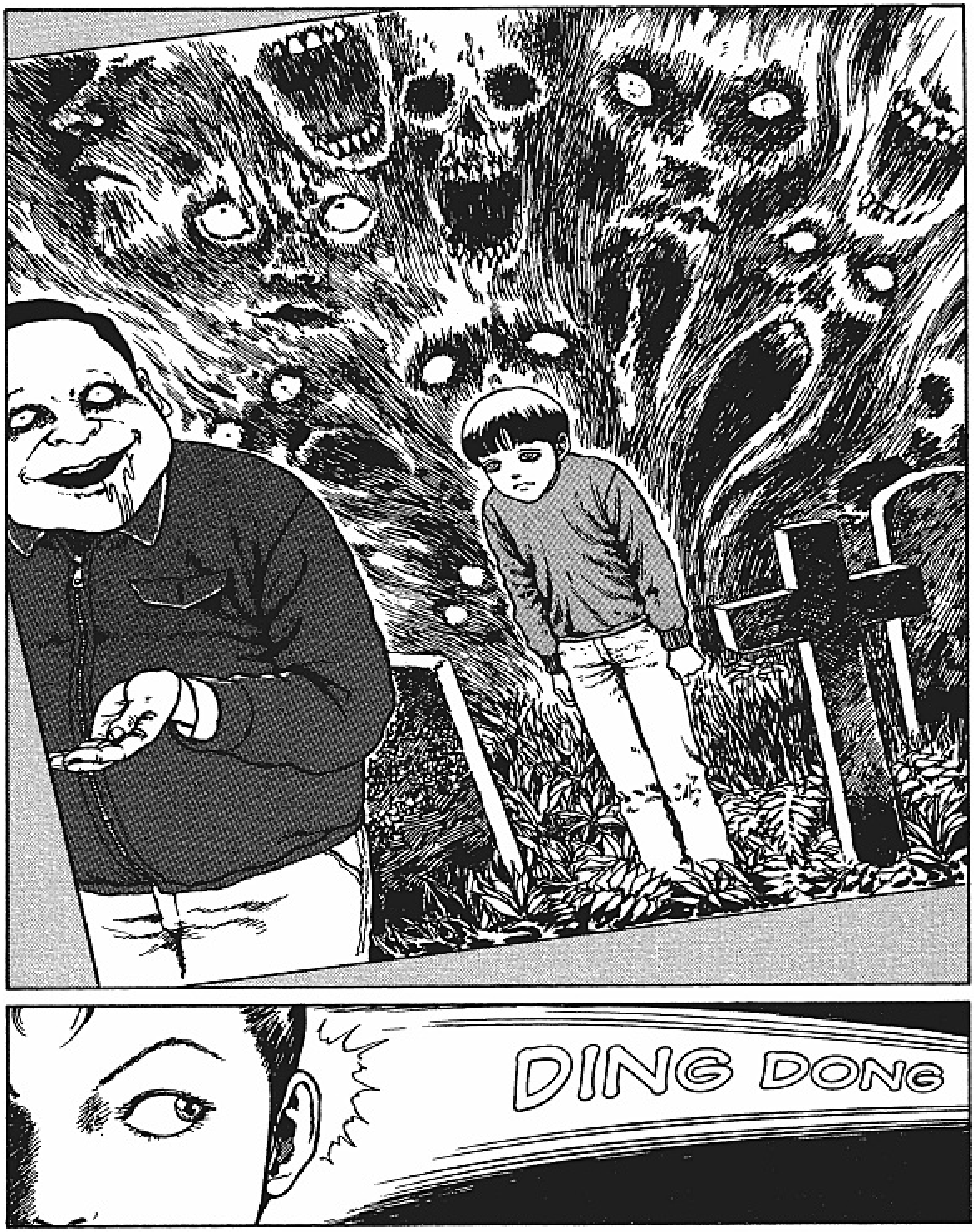

NO WONDER MISAKO GOT ANGRY.
WHAT AN IDIOT. WHO CONSOLES SOMEONE LIKE THAT?
EEEEE!
GRAAAAAR!
WERE YOU MAYBE IMPLYING THAT *I* LOOK THE MOST LIKE *DAD*?
SAY, SHIGORO? BEFORE, YOU SAID THAT OF US SISTERS, NARUMI LOOKS THE MOST LIKE *MOM*.
HUH? YEAH, I DID. WHY?
I WONDER. YOU WERE SAYING I TAKE AFTER DAD AND I'M THE UGLIEST, WEREN'T YOU?
HUH? WEREN'T YOU?
MNCH
HUH?
MNCH

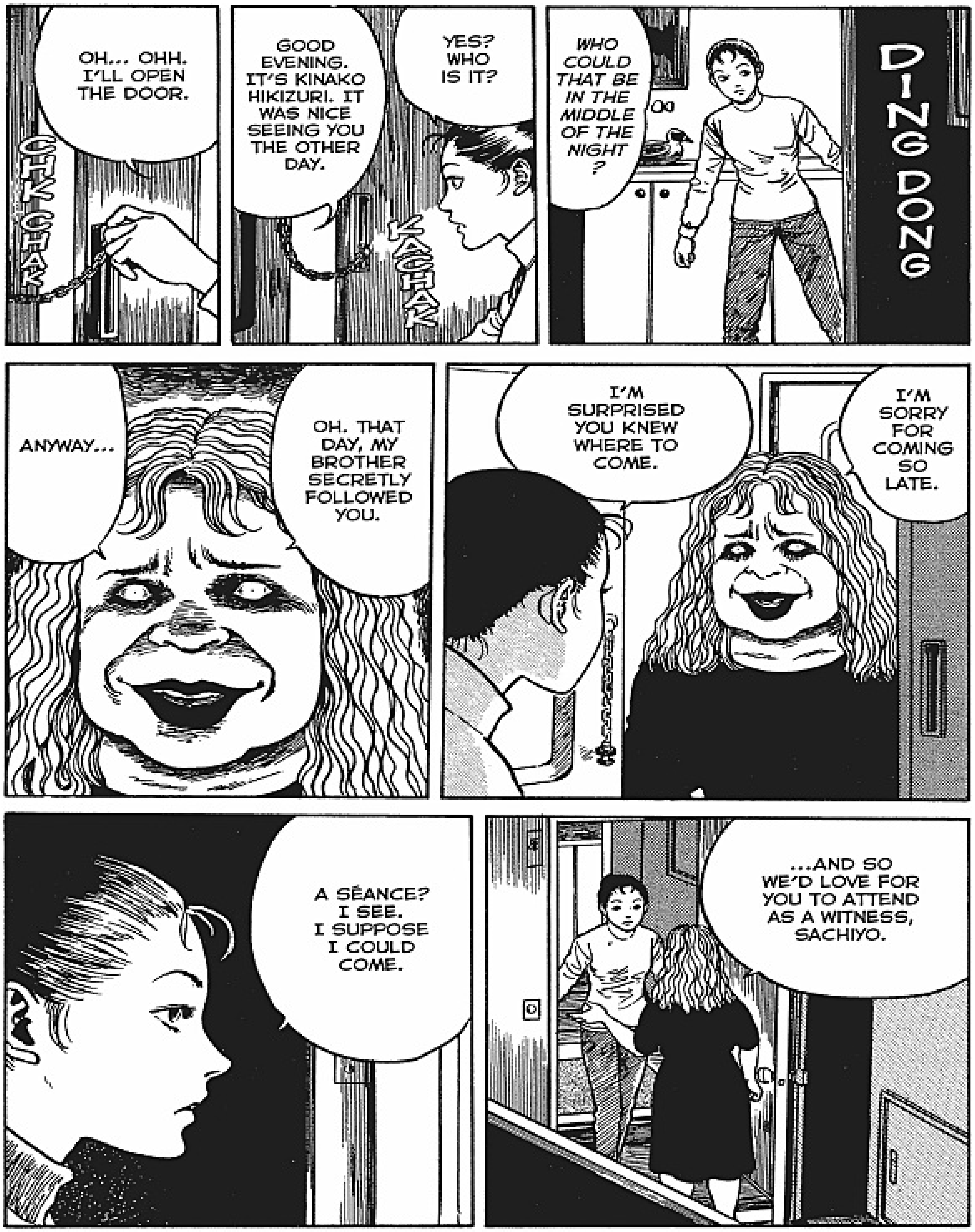

WHAT? NO. THAT'S YOUR PERSECUTION COMPLEX AGAIN.
WHAT?! NO, YOU THINK I'M AN UGLY WOMAN!
ALL I SAID WAS THAT NARUMI LOOKS LIKE MOM! WHY IS THIS HAPPENING?!
RIGHT, KAZUYA? I'M NOT WRONG, AM I?!
...
NAH, IT'S NO WONDER KINAKO'S ANGRY! SHIGORO! YOU REALLY ARE TACTLESS.
YOU NEVER CONSIDER OTHER PEOPLE'S FEELINGS! YOU'RE JUST THAT KIND OF GUY!
YOU ONLY EVER THINK OF YOURSELF! WHAT GIVES YOU THE RIGHT TO SAY SOMETHING LIKE THAT TO KINAKO WHEN YOU TAKE AFTER DAD?!
HONESTLY! EVERYTHING'S GOOD AS LONG AS YOU'RE HAPPY! YOU ALWAYS WANT THE CAKE ALL TO YOURSELF!
YOU TRY TO TAKE ALL THE GOOD BITS FOR YOURSELF! THAT'S WHY YOU'RE SO FAT!
K-KAZUYA, YOU'RE BEING SO MEAN!

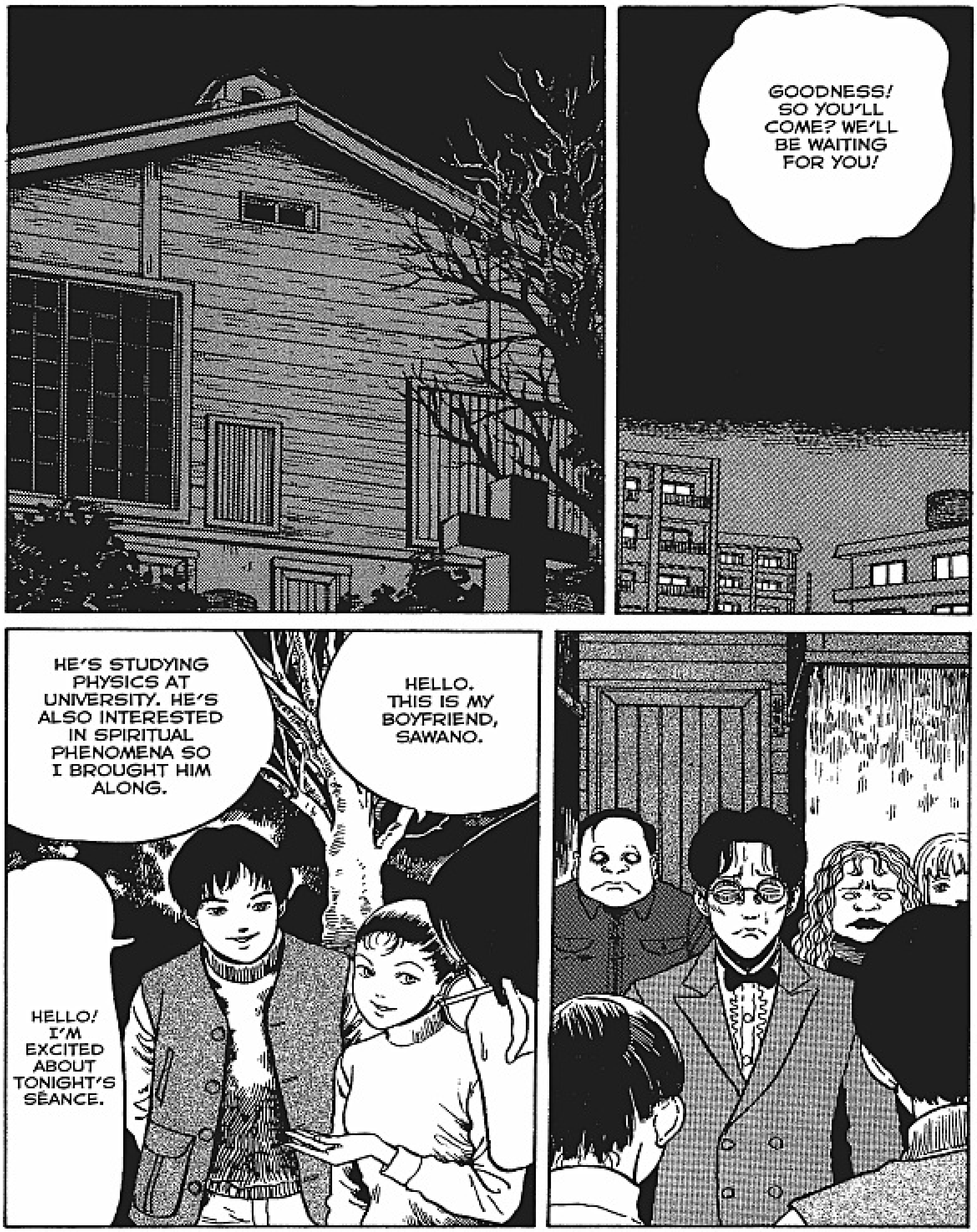

WHY ARE YOU SAYING ALL THIS, KAZUYA?!
SHUT UP! WHINING LIKE THAT EVEN THOUGH YOU'RE A BOY. YOU'RE NOTHING BUT A TIRESOME NOBODY!
SHF
AAAH, NOPE. NO THANKS. I'VE HAD ENOUGH OF THIS.
I'M GOING TO BED.
GOOD NIGHT.
SHIGORO! YOU'RE ABOUT TO BURST INTO TEARS OVER A THING LIKE THIS?! A MAN NEVER CRIES!
NO MATTER WHAT THE OCCASION, A MAN ENDURES WITH A STRONG WILL AND REACHES OUT TO THE OTHER PERSON WITH AN OPEN HEART.
THAT IS WHAT A MAN IS!
YOU'RE A DISGRACE TO THE CONCEPT OF MANHOOD! YOU PIECE OF GARBAGE!
THAT'S SO MEAN... YOU'RE SO MEAN... I'M GOING TO BED. GOOD NIGHT!

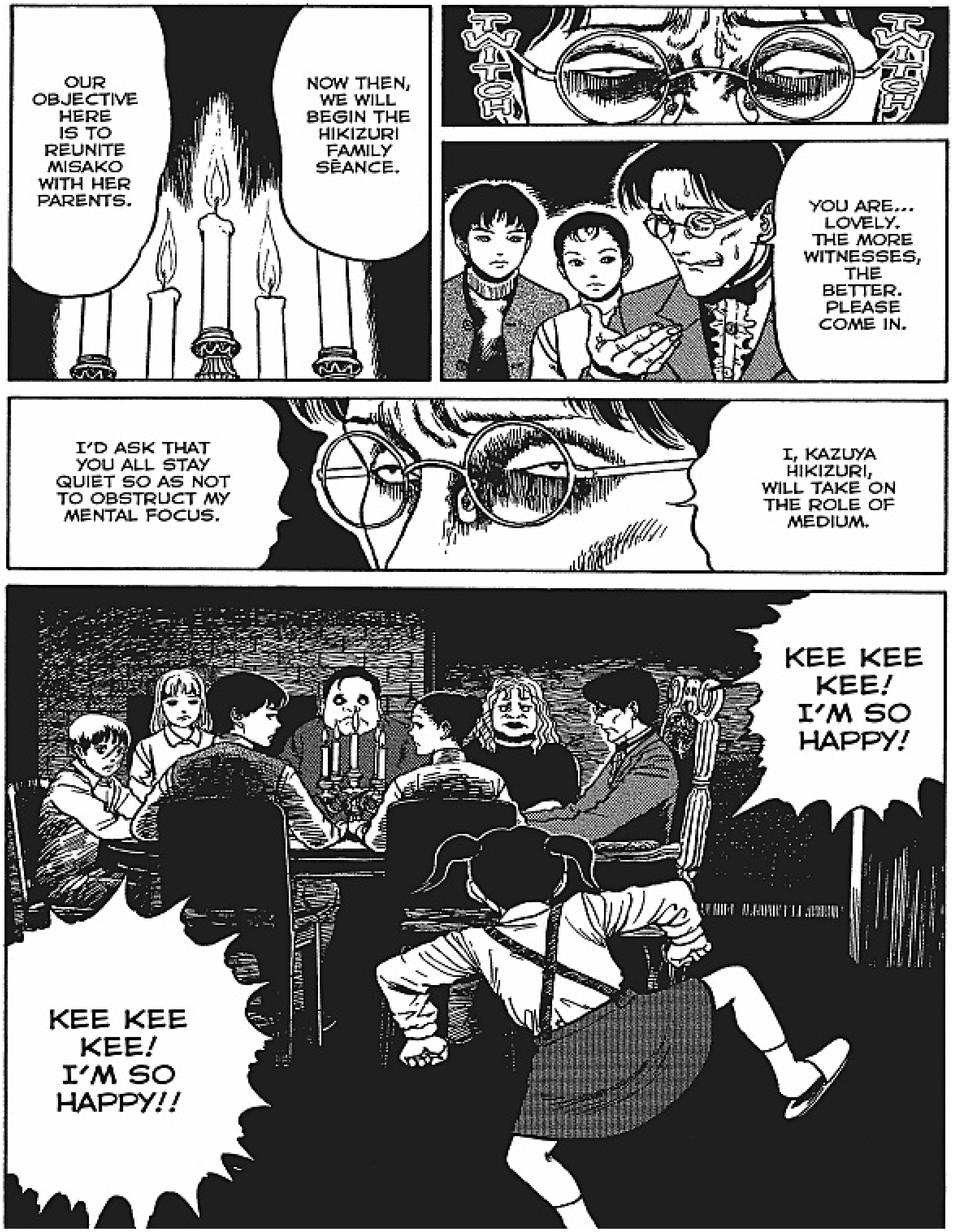

HEY, KAZUYA? MAYBE YOU WENT A LITTLE TOO FAR? IT'S TRUE SHIGORO WAS IN THE WRONG, BUT HE CAN'T HELP IT.
HMPH. IT'S FINE. I WANTED TO LET HIM HAVE IT JUST ONCE.
NGH NGH.
ANYWAY, KINAKO. I HAD THIS IDEA.
MAYBE WE COULD LET MISAKO SEE OUR PARENTS. HOW ABOUT IT?
WHAT? HOW? HOW CAN WE LET HER SEE SOMEONE WHO'S DEAD?
WE CALL UP THE DEAD. A SÉANCE.
WE CALL THE SPIRITS OF OUR PARENTS.
BUT...
...CAN WE REALLY DO THAT?
WE WON'T KNOW UNLESS WE TRY.
BUT I BELIEVE I CAN! I'M SURE I HAVE SPIRITUAL POWER.

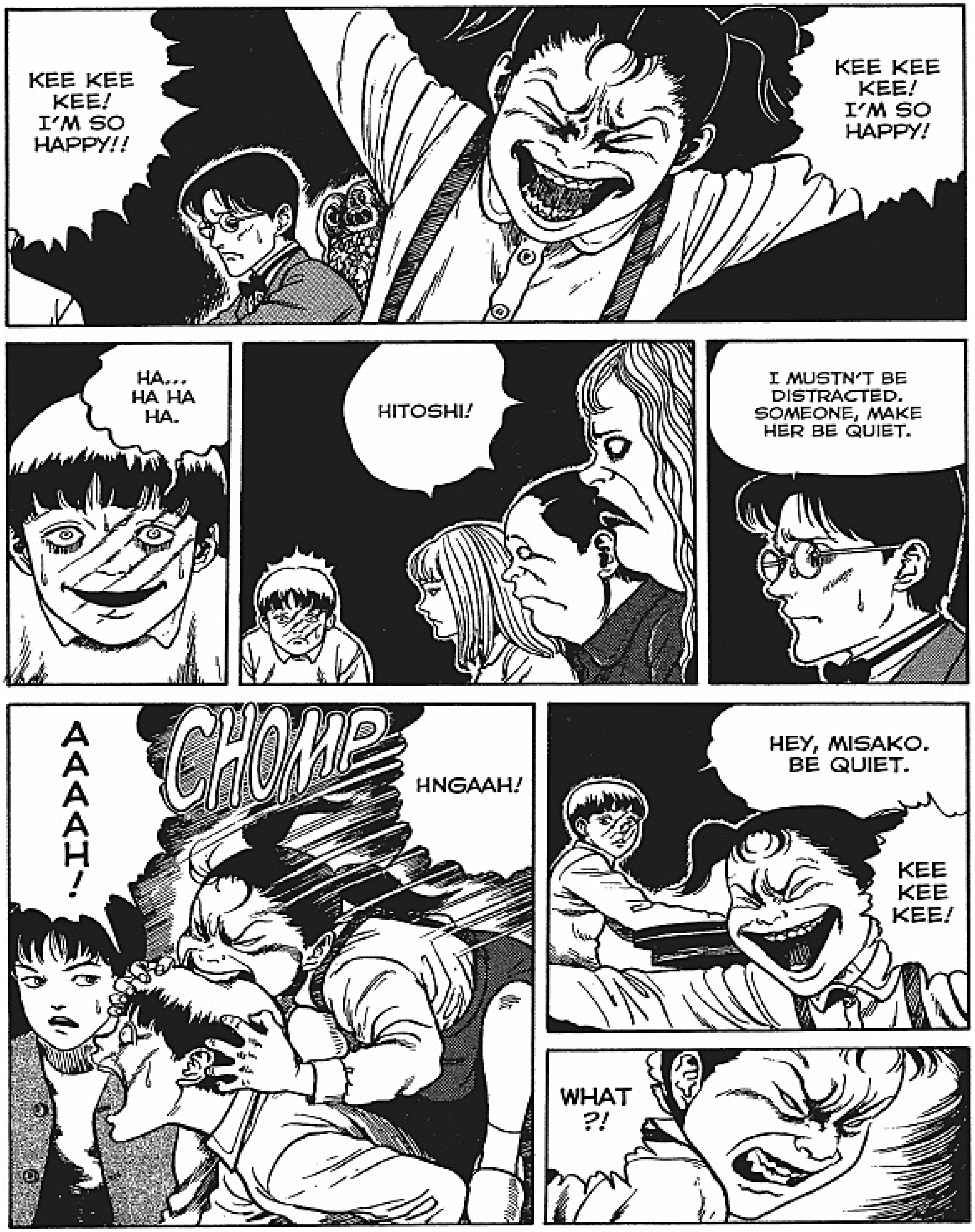

AND...I WAS THINKING OF INVITING HER—SACHIYO. WHAT DO YOU THINK?
AH! SO THAT'S WHAT YOU'RE REALLY AFTER.
D-DON'T BE RIDICULOUS.
SPLSH
SPLSH
WOW... THIS IS AMAZING.
ALL THE PICTURES SHOW SOMETHING THAT'S DEFINITELY SPIRIT-LIKE.
ESPECIALLY THIS ONE. THIS PHOTO'S INCREDIBLE.
BEHIND THIS CHILD...

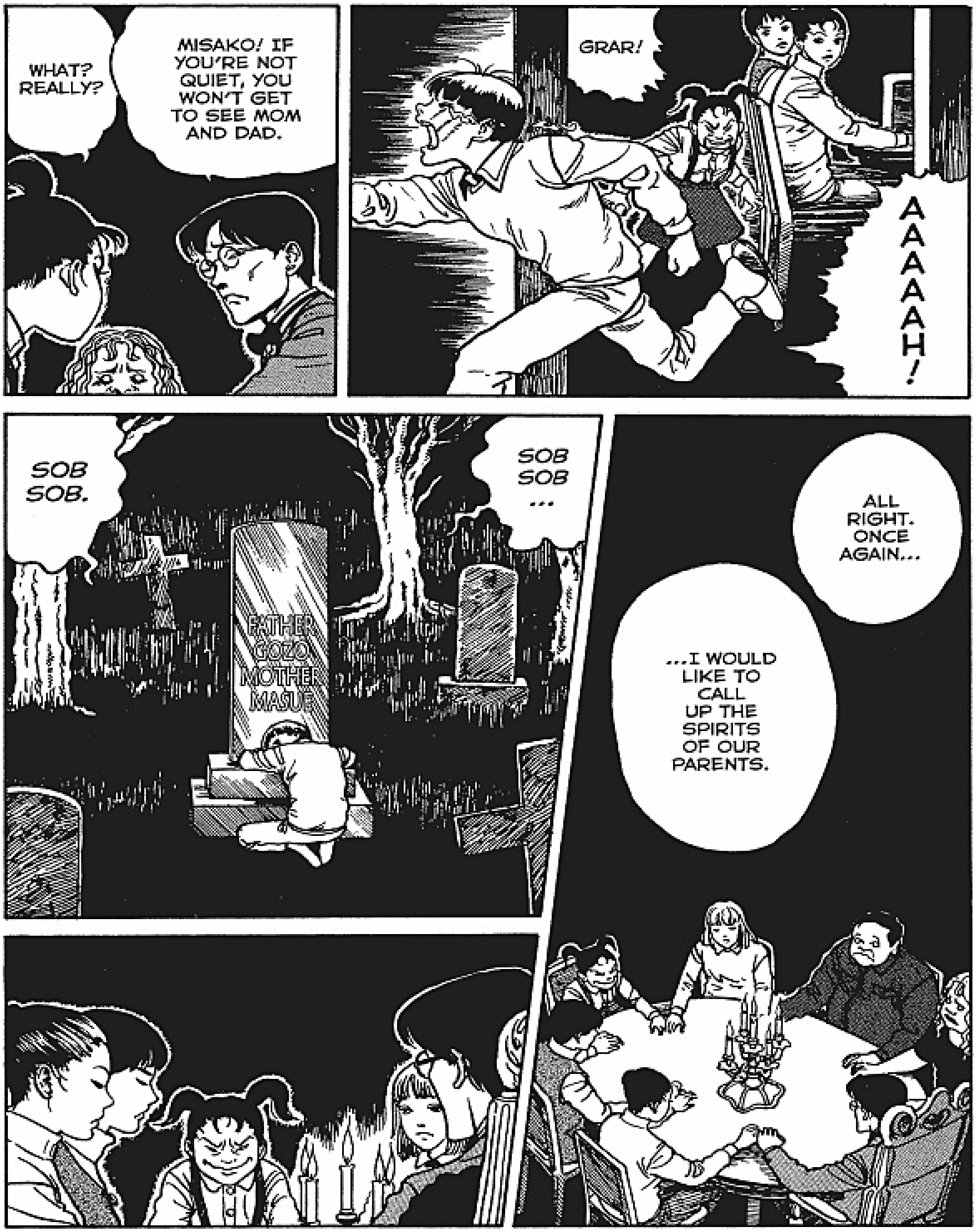

DING DONG

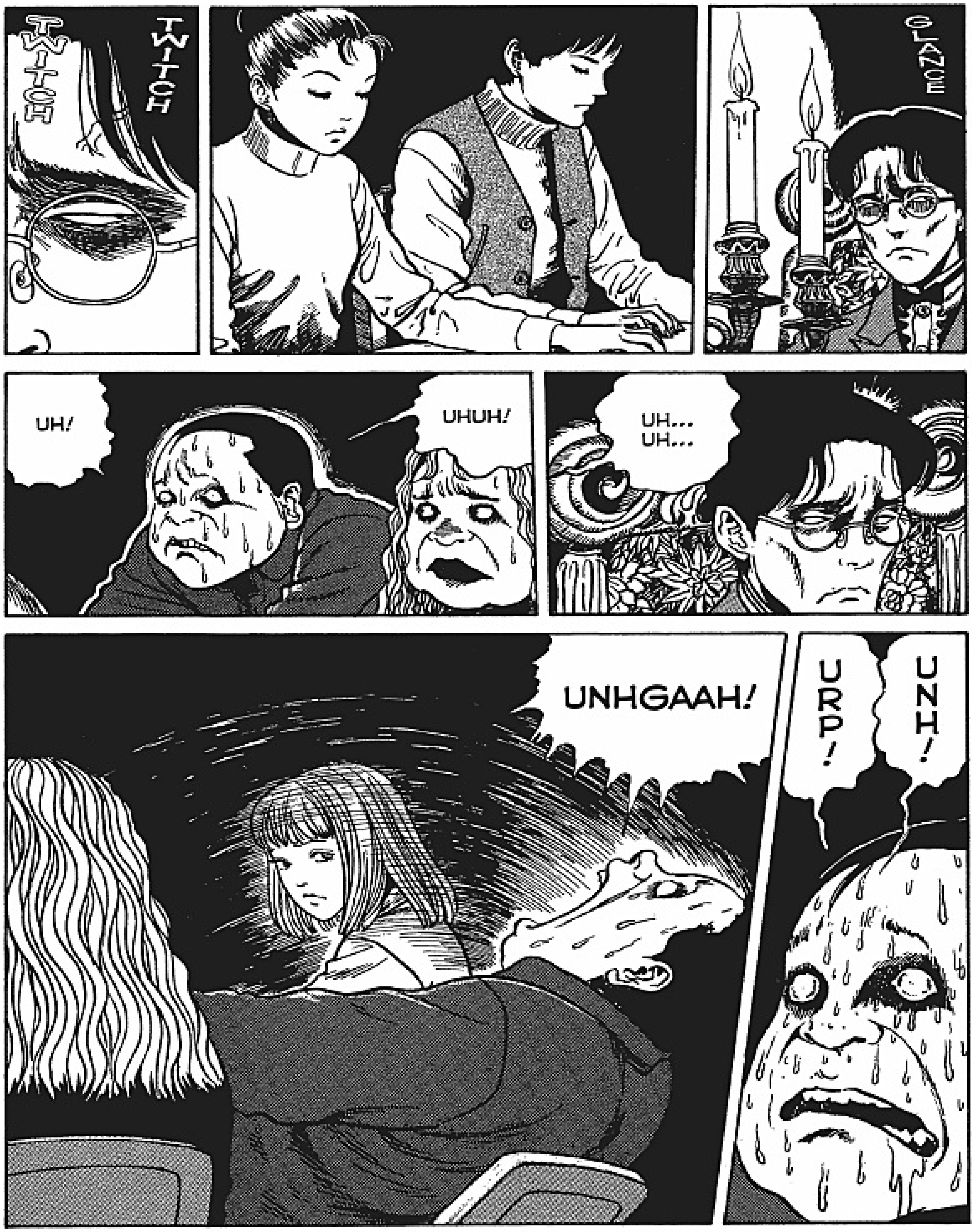

DING DONG
WHO COULD THAT BE IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT?
YES? WHO IS IT?
GOOD EVENING. IT'S KINAKO HIKIZURI. IT WAS NICE SEEING YOU THE OTHER DAY.
KACHAK
OH... OHH. I'LL OPEN THE DOOR.
CHAK CHAK
I'M SORRY FOR COMING SO LATE.
I'M SURPRISED YOU KNEW WHERE TO COME.
OH. THAT DAY, MY BROTHER SECRETLY FOLLOWED YOU.
ANYWAY...
...AND SO WE'D LOVE FOR YOU TO ATTEND AS A WITNESS, SACHIYO.
A SÉANCE? I SEE. I SUPPOSE I COULD COME.

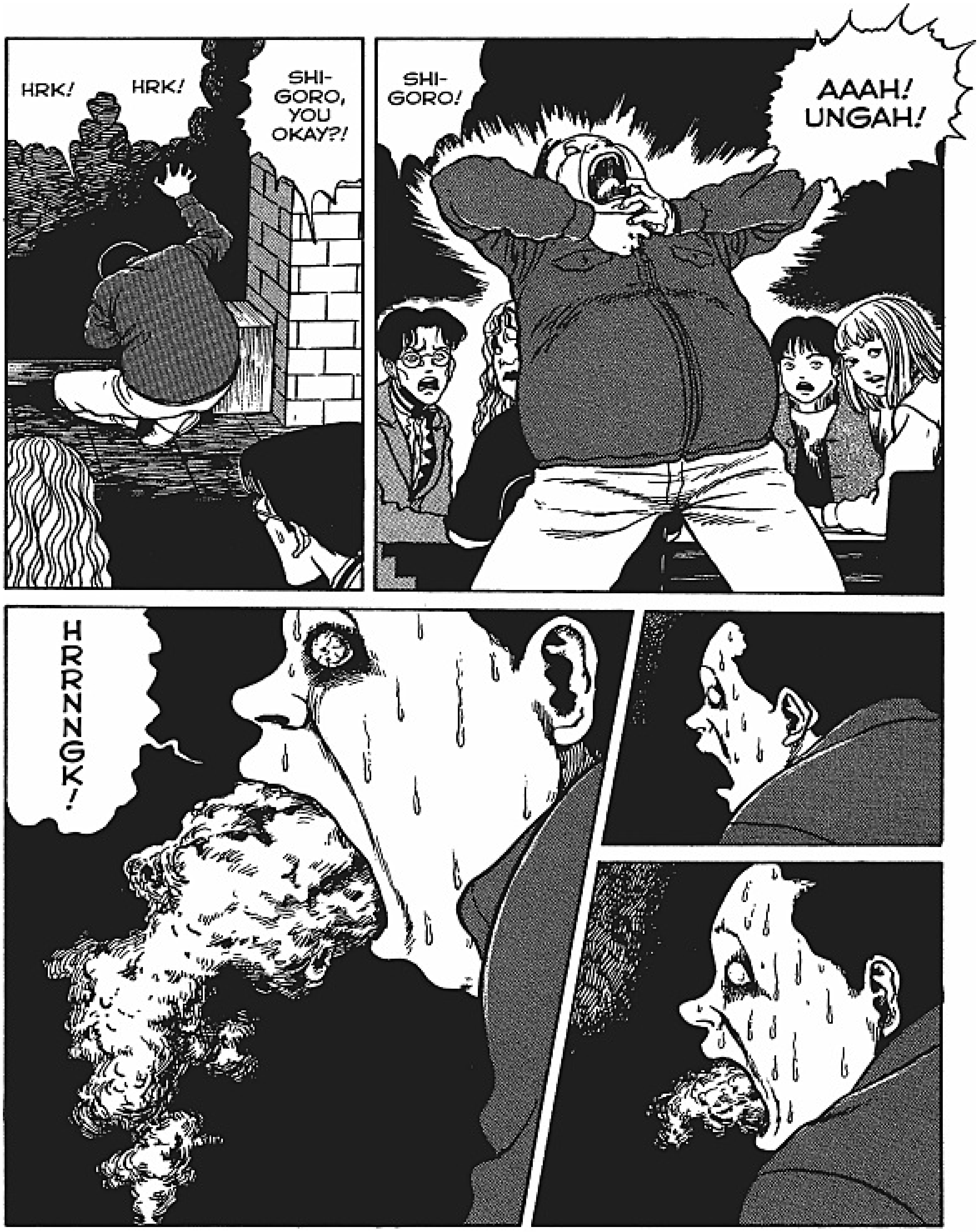

GOODNESS! SO YOU'LL COME? WE'LL BE WAITING FOR YOU!
HELLO. THIS IS MY BOYFRIEND, SAWANO.
HE'S STUDYING PHYSICS AT UNIVERSITY. HE'S ALSO INTERESTED IN SPIRITUAL PHENOMENA SO I BROUGHT HIM ALONG.
HELLO! I'M EXCITED ABOUT TONIGHT'S SÉANCE.

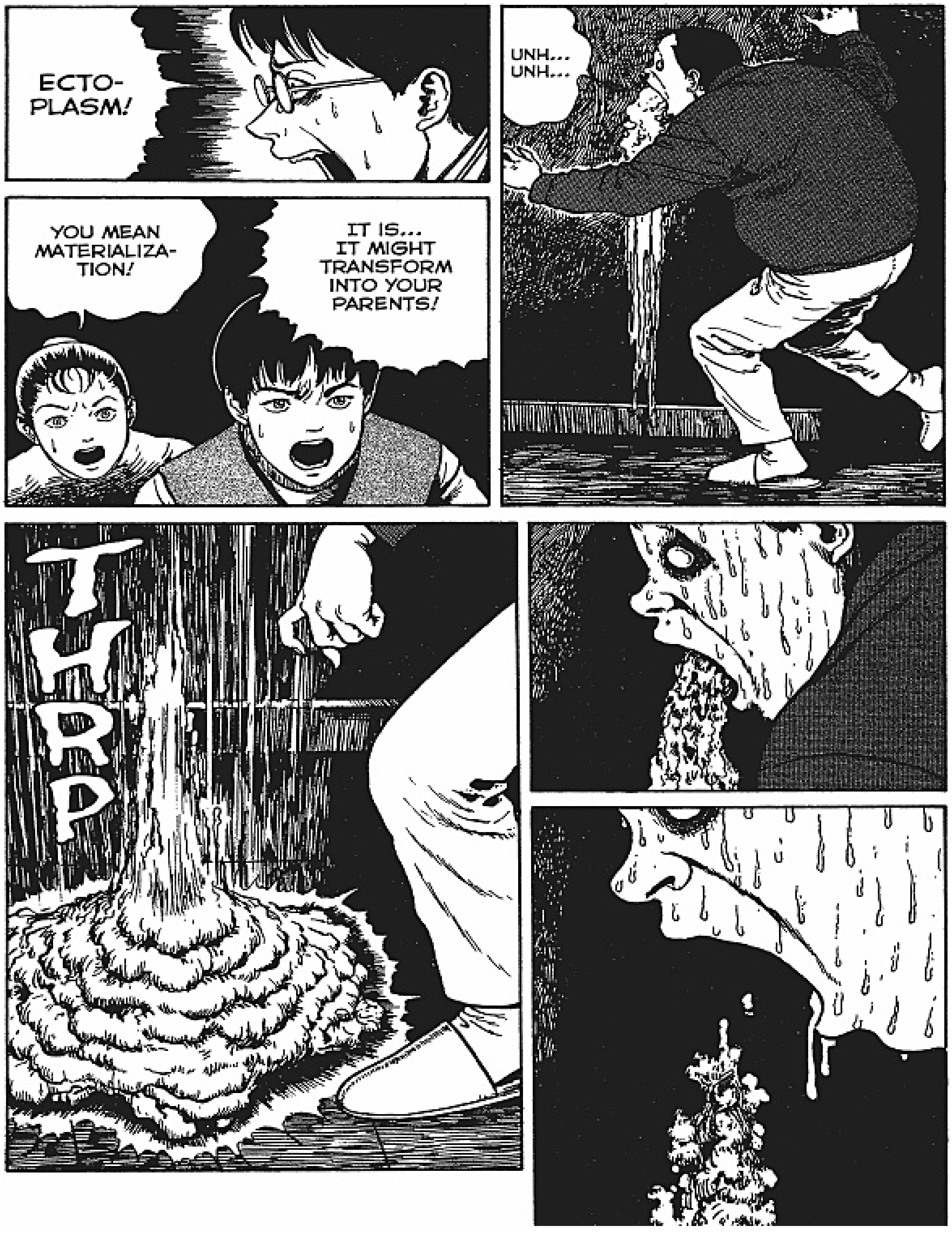

TWITCH
TWITCH
YOU ARE... LOVELY. THE MORE WITNESSES, THE BETTER. PLEASE COME IN.
NOW THEN, WE WILL BEGIN THE HIKIZURI FAMILY SÉANCE.
OUR OBJECTIVE HERE IS TO REUNITE MISAKO WITH HER PARENTS.
I, KAZUYA HIKIZURI, WILL TAKE ON THE ROLE OF MEDIUM.
I'D ASK THAT YOU ALL STAY QUIET SO AS NOT TO OBSTRUCT MY MENTAL FOCUS.
KEE KEE KEE! I'M SO HAPPY!
KEE KEE KEE! I'M SO HAPPY!!

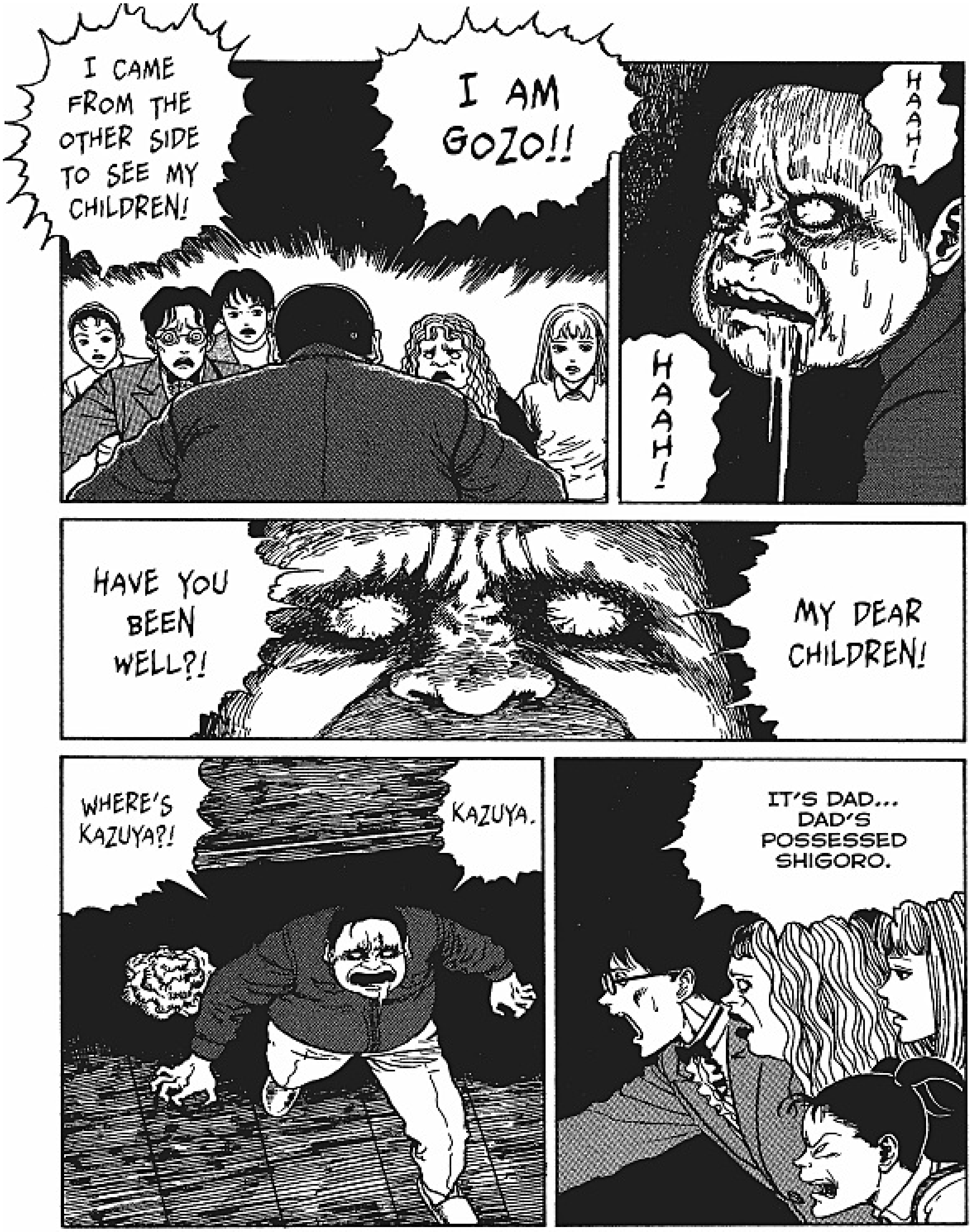

KEE KEE KEE! I'M SO HAPPY!
KEE KEE KEE! I'M SO HAPPY!!
I MUSTN'T BE DISTRACTED. SOMEONE, MAKE HER BE QUIET.
HITOSHI!
HA... HA HA HA.
HEY, MISAKO. BE QUIET.
KEE KEE KEE!
WHAT ?!
HNGAAH!
CHOMP
AAAAH!

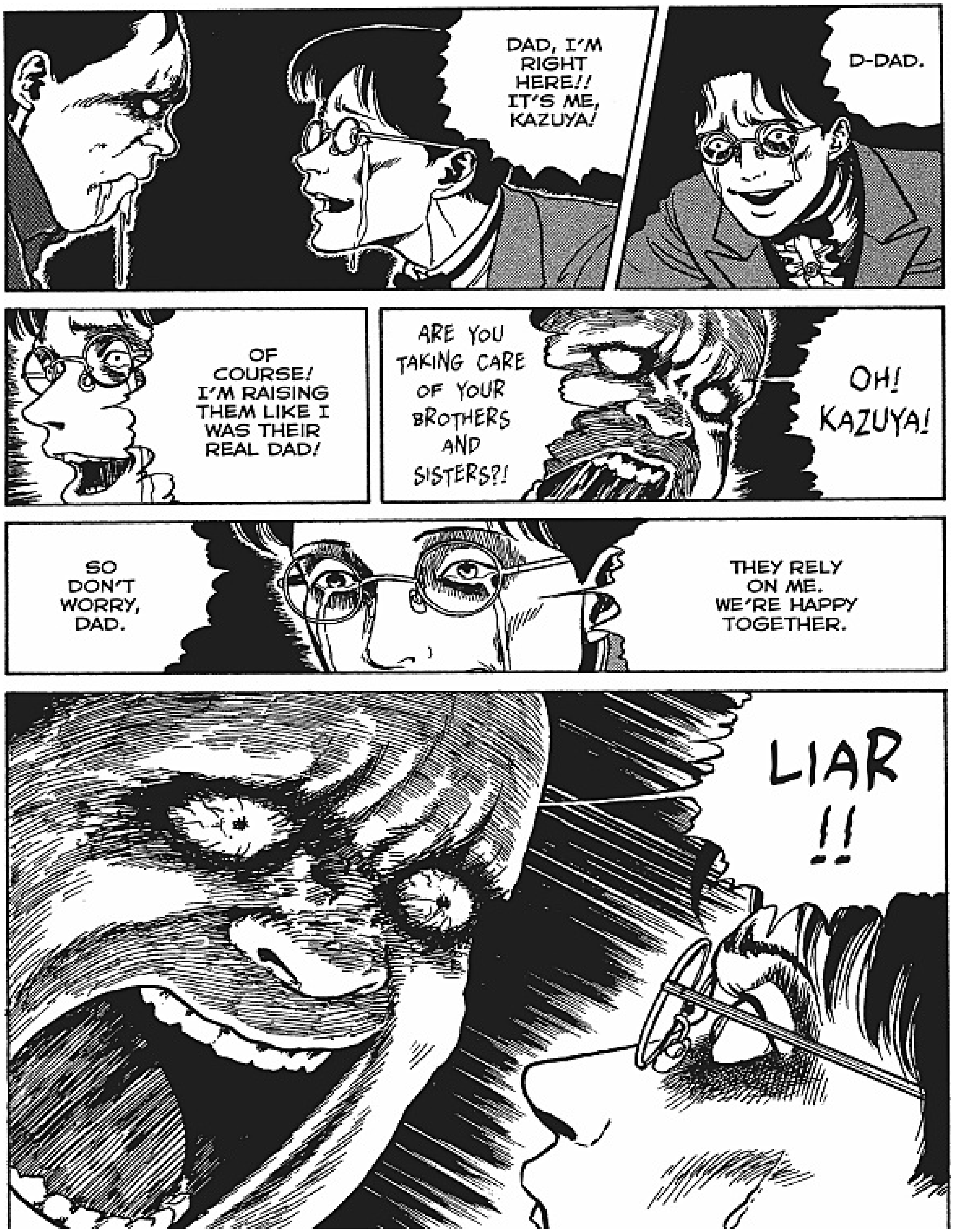

MISAKO! IF YOU'RE NOT QUIET, YOU WON'T GET TO SEE MOM AND DAD.
WHAT? REALLY?
GRAR!
AAAAAH!
SOB SOB.
FATHER GOZO MOTHER MASUE
SOB SOB ...
ALL RIGHT. ONCE AGAIN...
...I WOULD LIKE TO CALL UP THE SPIRITS OF OUR PARENTS.

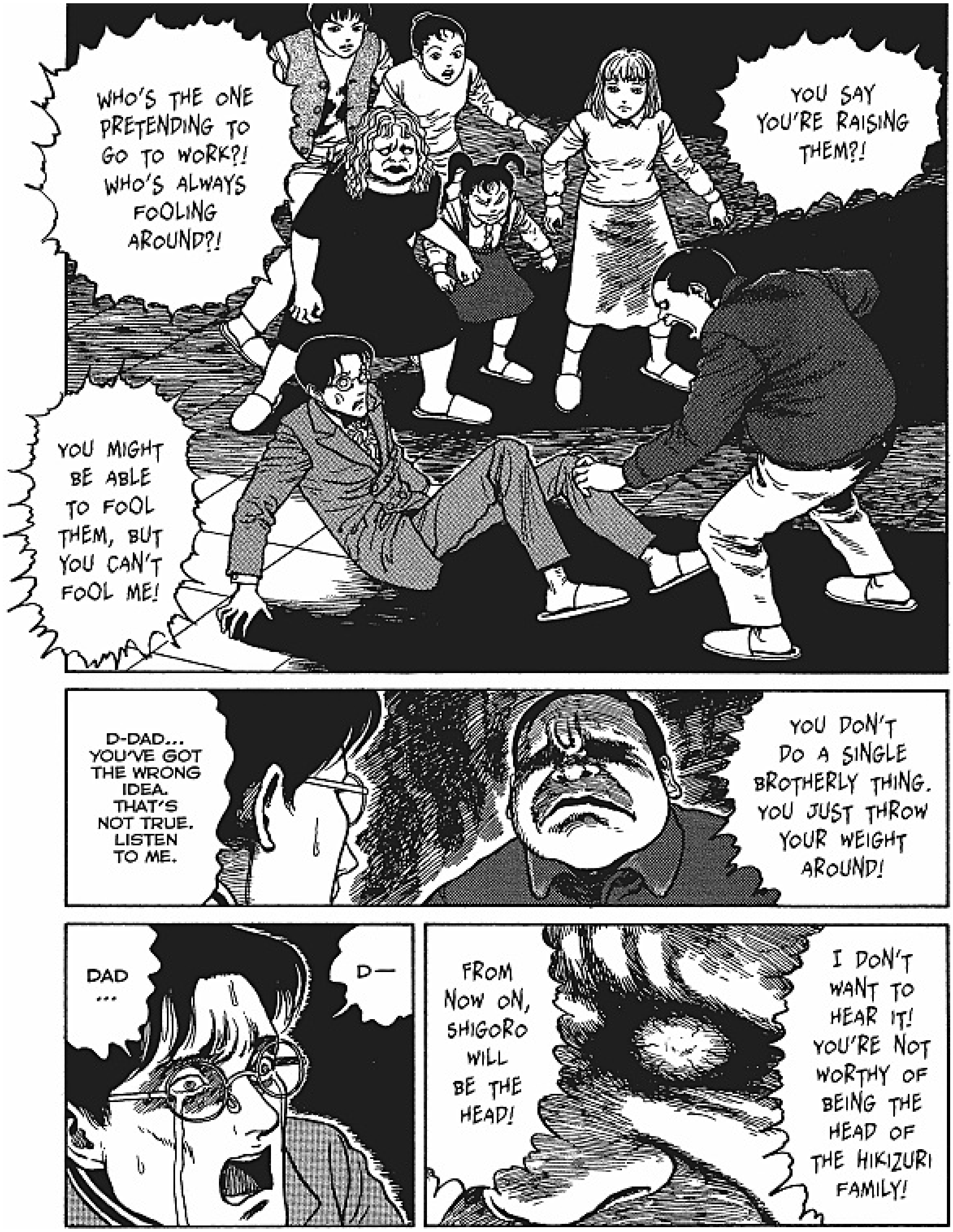

GLANCE
TWITCH
TWITCH
UH... UH...
UHUH!
UH!
UNH!
URP!
UNHGAAH!

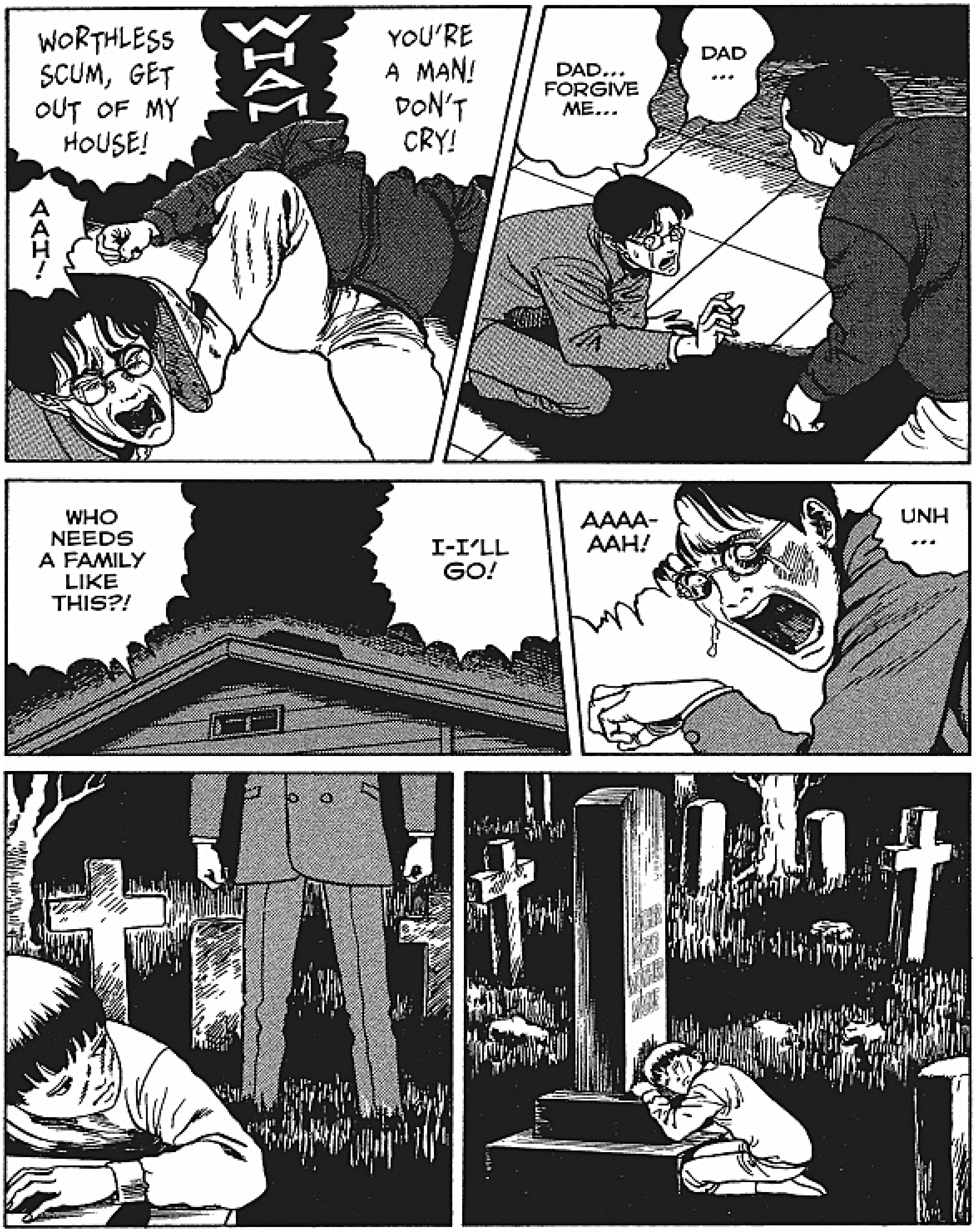

HRK!
HRK!
SHI-GORO, YOU OKAY?!
SHI-GORO!
AAAH! UNGAH!
HRRNNGK!

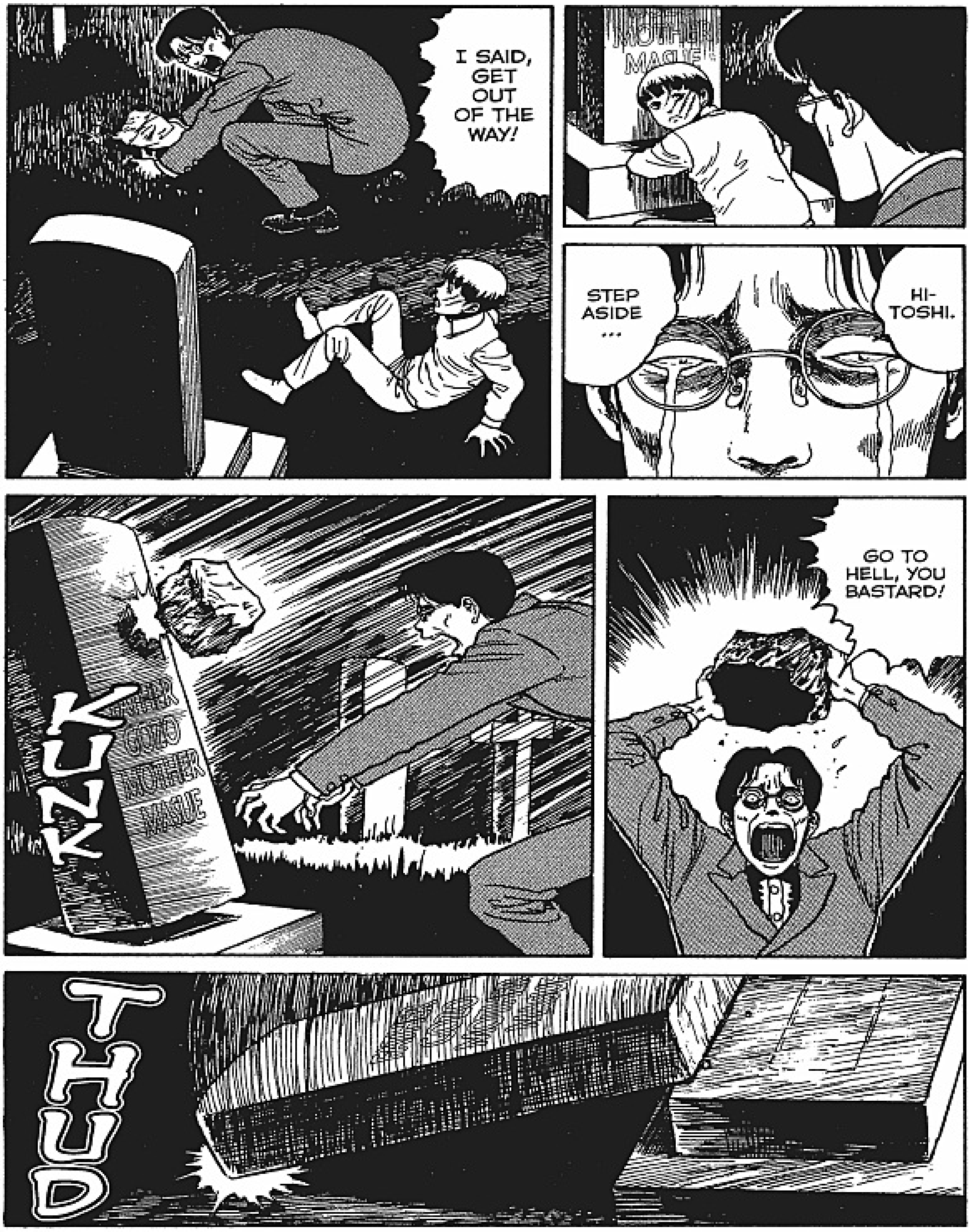

UNH... UNH...
ECTO-PLASM!
IT IS... IT MIGHT TRANSFORM INTO YOUR PARENTS!
YOU MEAN MATERIALIZA-TION!
THRP

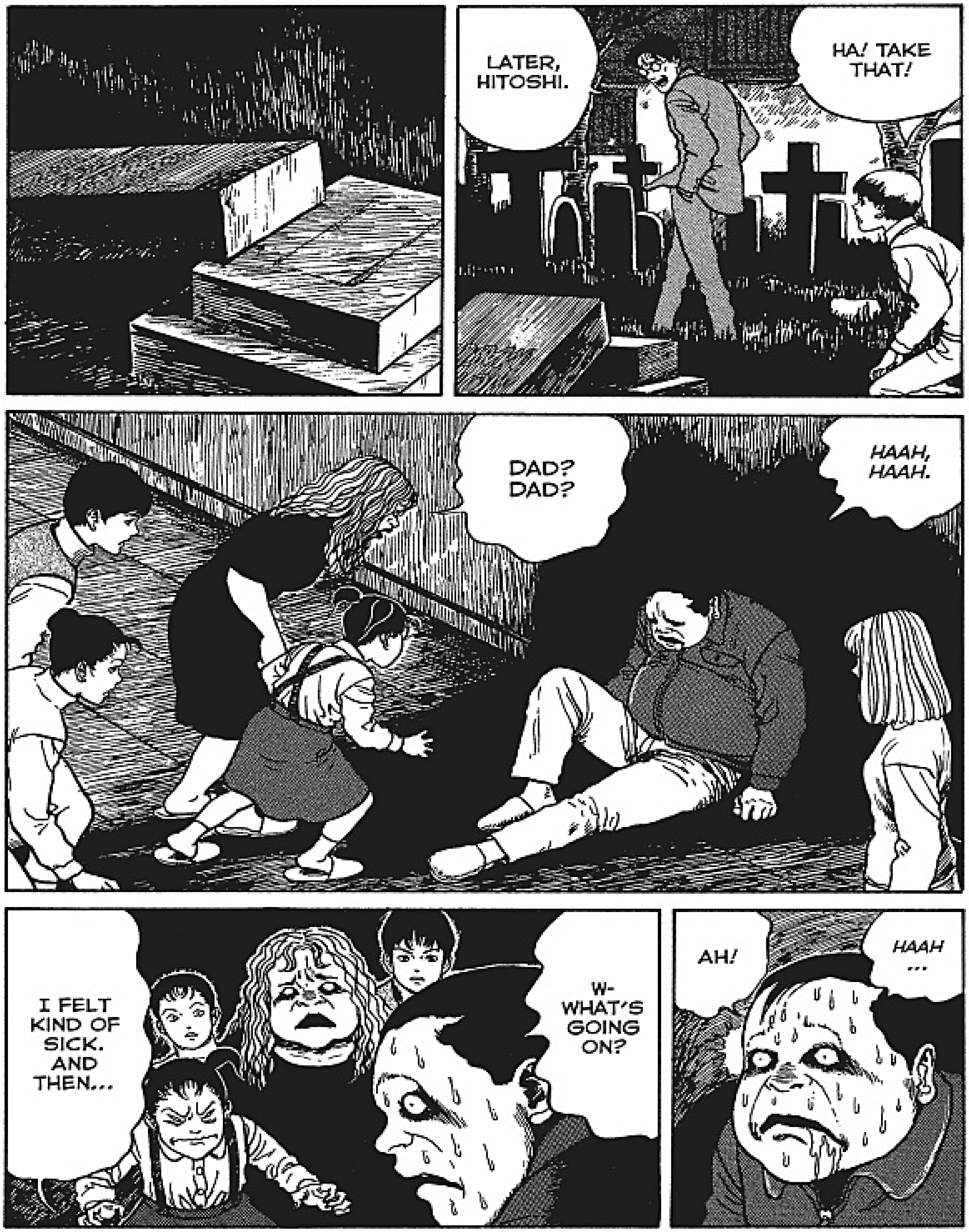

HAAAH!
HAAAH!
I AM GOZO!!
I CAME FROM THE OTHER SIDE TO SEE MY CHILDREN!
MY DEAR CHILDREN!
HAVE YOU BEEN WELL?!
IT'S DAD... DAD'S POSSESSED SHIGORO.
KAZUYA.
WHERE'S KAZUYA?!

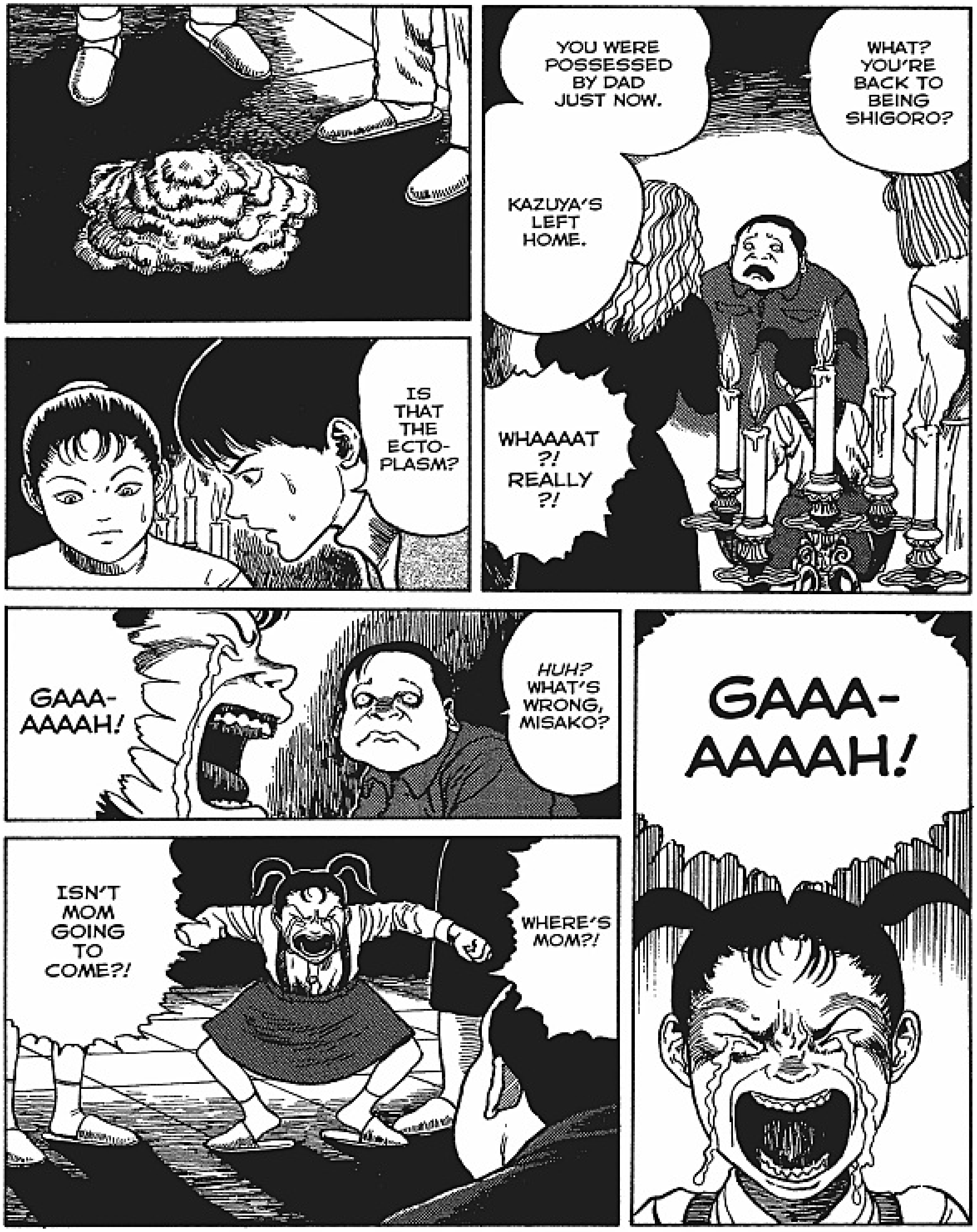

D-DAD.
DAD, I'M RIGHT HERE!! IT'S ME, KAZUYA!
OH! KAZUYA!
ARE YOU TAKING CARE OF YOUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS?!
OF COURSE! I'M RAISING THEM LIKE I WAS THEIR REAL DAD!
THEY RELY ON ME. WE'RE HAPPY TOGETHER.
SO DON'T WORRY, DAD.
LIAR !!

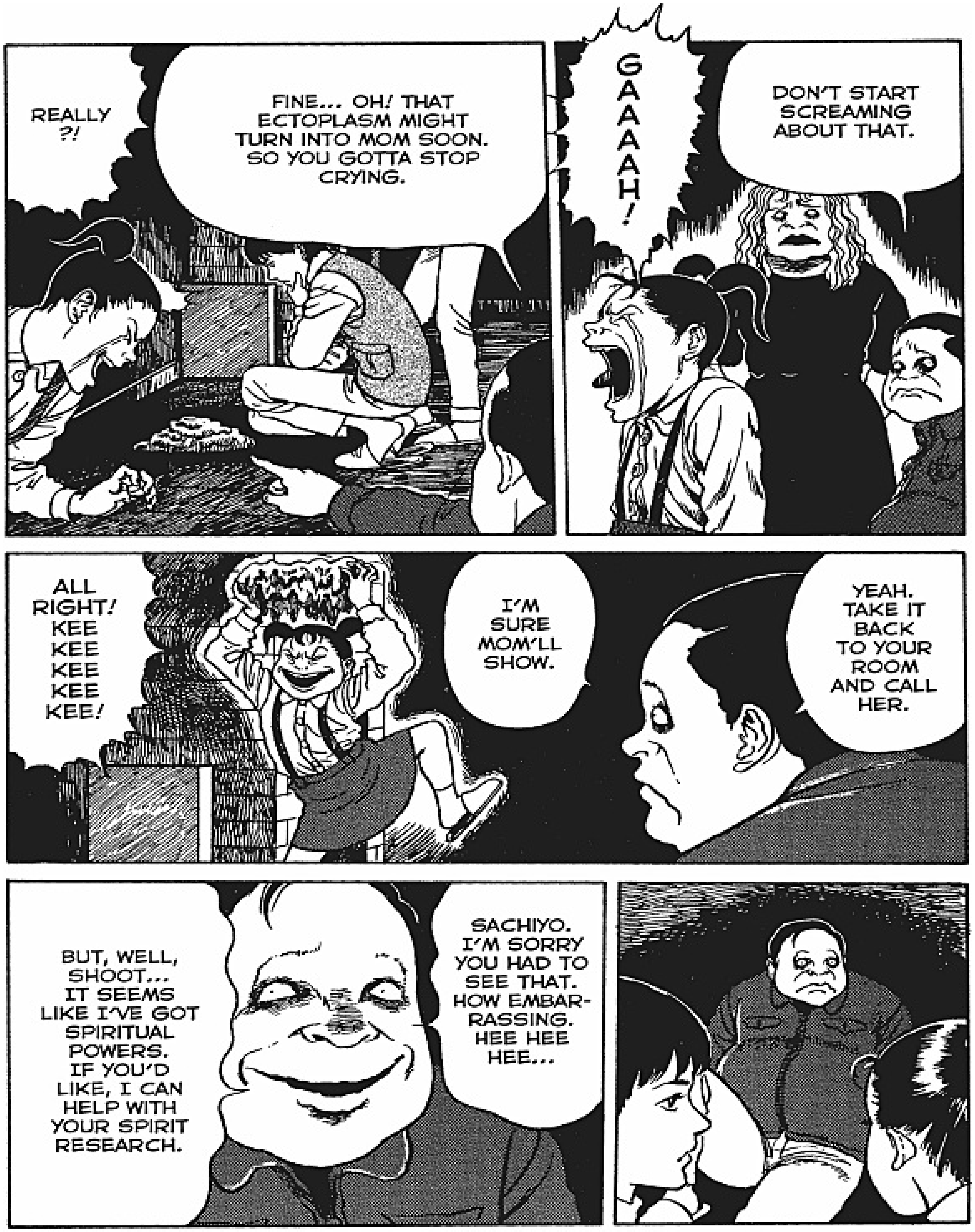

YOU SAY YOU'RE RAISING THEM?!
WHO'S THE ONE PRETENDING TO GO TO WORK?! WHO'S ALWAYS FOOLING AROUND?!
YOU MIGHT BE ABLE TO FOOL THEM, BUT YOU CAN'T FOOL ME!
D-DAD... YOU'VE GOT THE WRONG IDEA. THAT'S NOT TRUE. LISTEN TO ME.
YOU DON'T DO A SINGLE BROTHERLY THING. YOU JUST THROW YOUR WEIGHT AROUND!
DAD...
D—
I DON'T WANT TO HEAR IT! YOU'RE NOT WORTHY OF BEING THE HEAD OF THE HIKIZURI FAMILY!
FROM NOW ON, SHIGORO WILL BE THE HEAD!

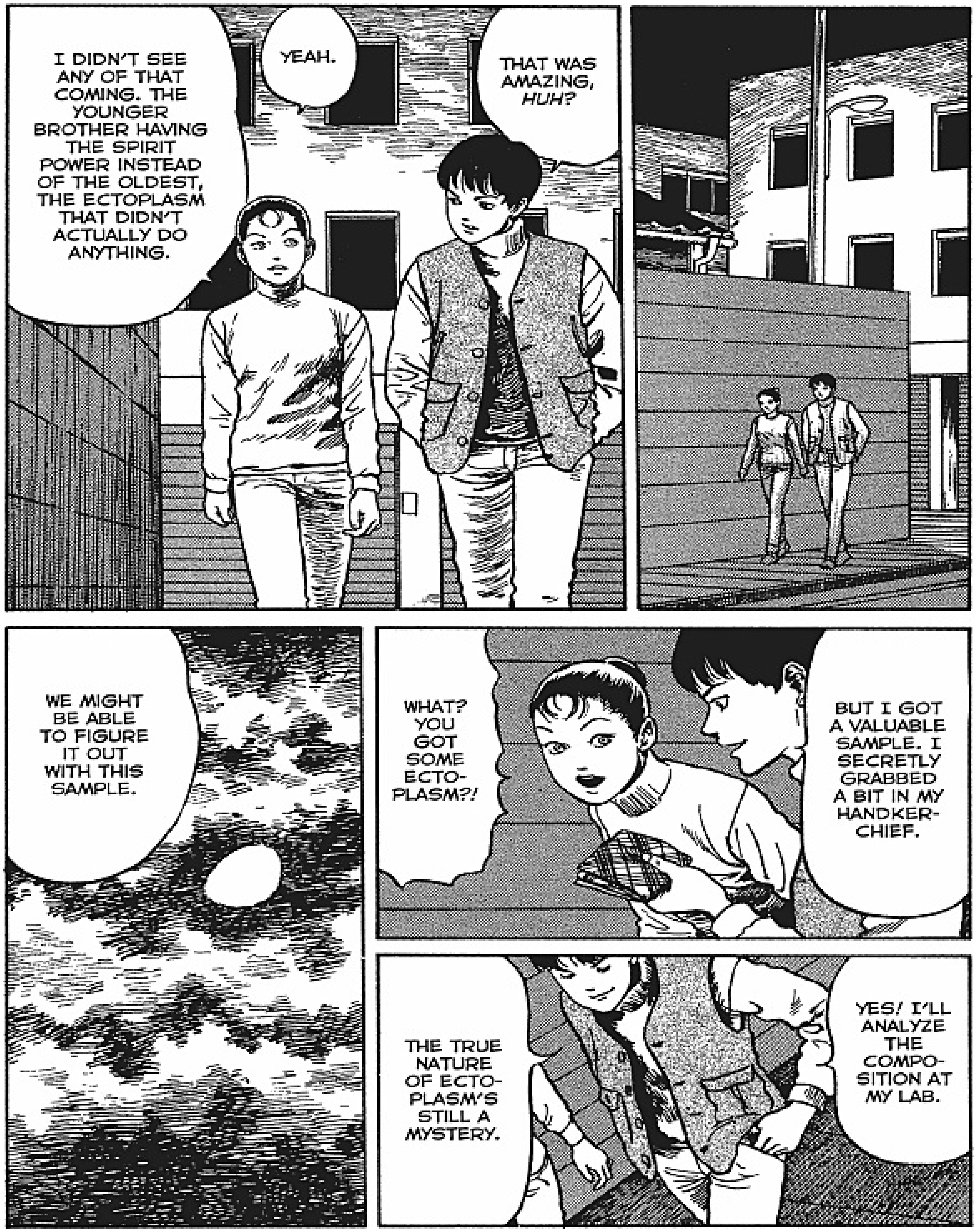

DAD ...
DAD... FORGIVE ME...
YOU'RE A MAN! DON'T CRY!
WHAM
WORTHLESS SCUM, GET OUT OF MY HOUSE!
AAH!
UNH ...
AAAA-AAH!
I-I'LL GO!
WHO NEEDS A FAMILY LIKE THIS?!

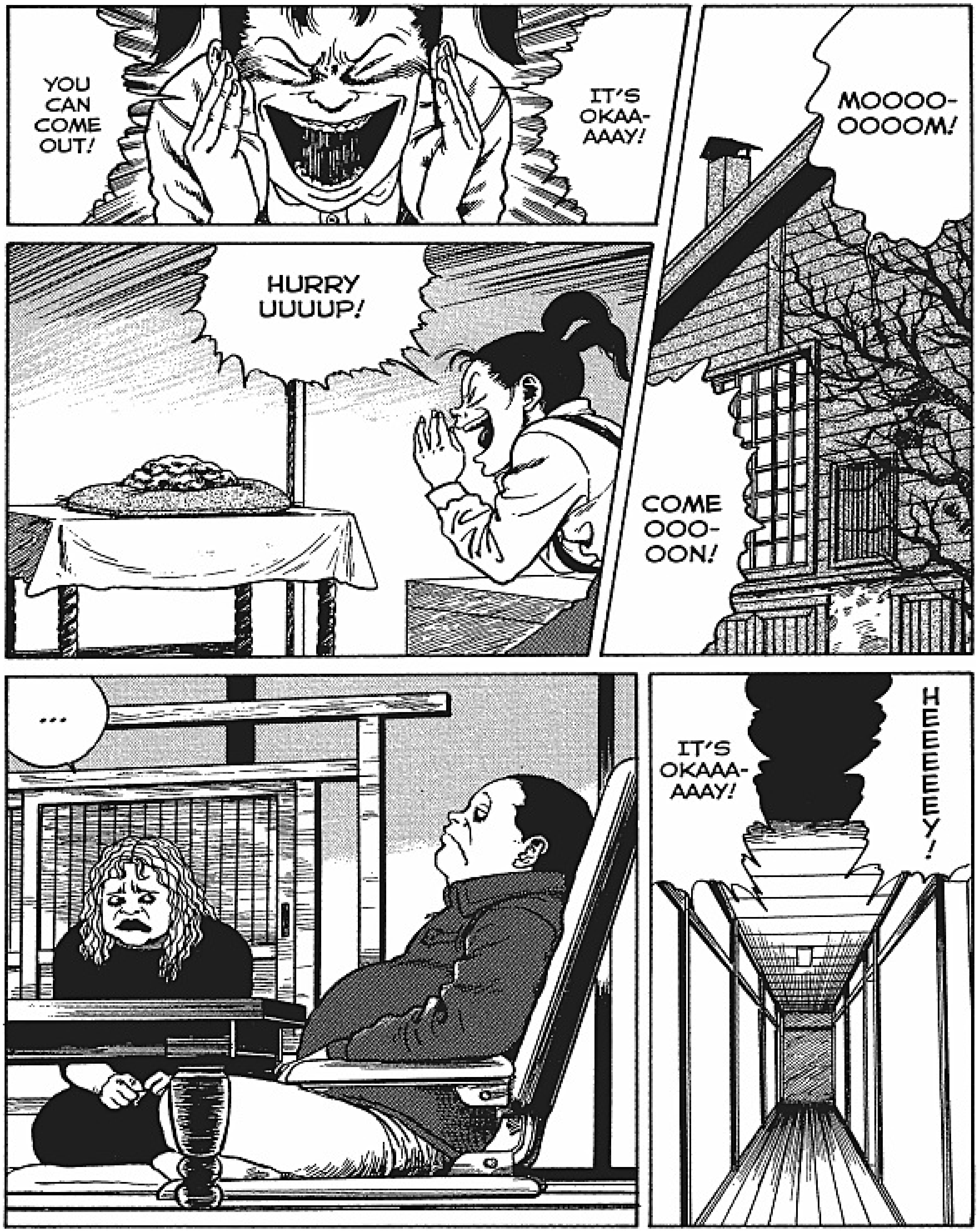

MOTHER
MASUE
HI-TOSHI.
STEP ASIDE ...
I SAID, GET OUT OF THE WAY!
GO TO HELL, YOU BASTARD!
GOZO
MOTHER
MASUE
KUNK
THUD

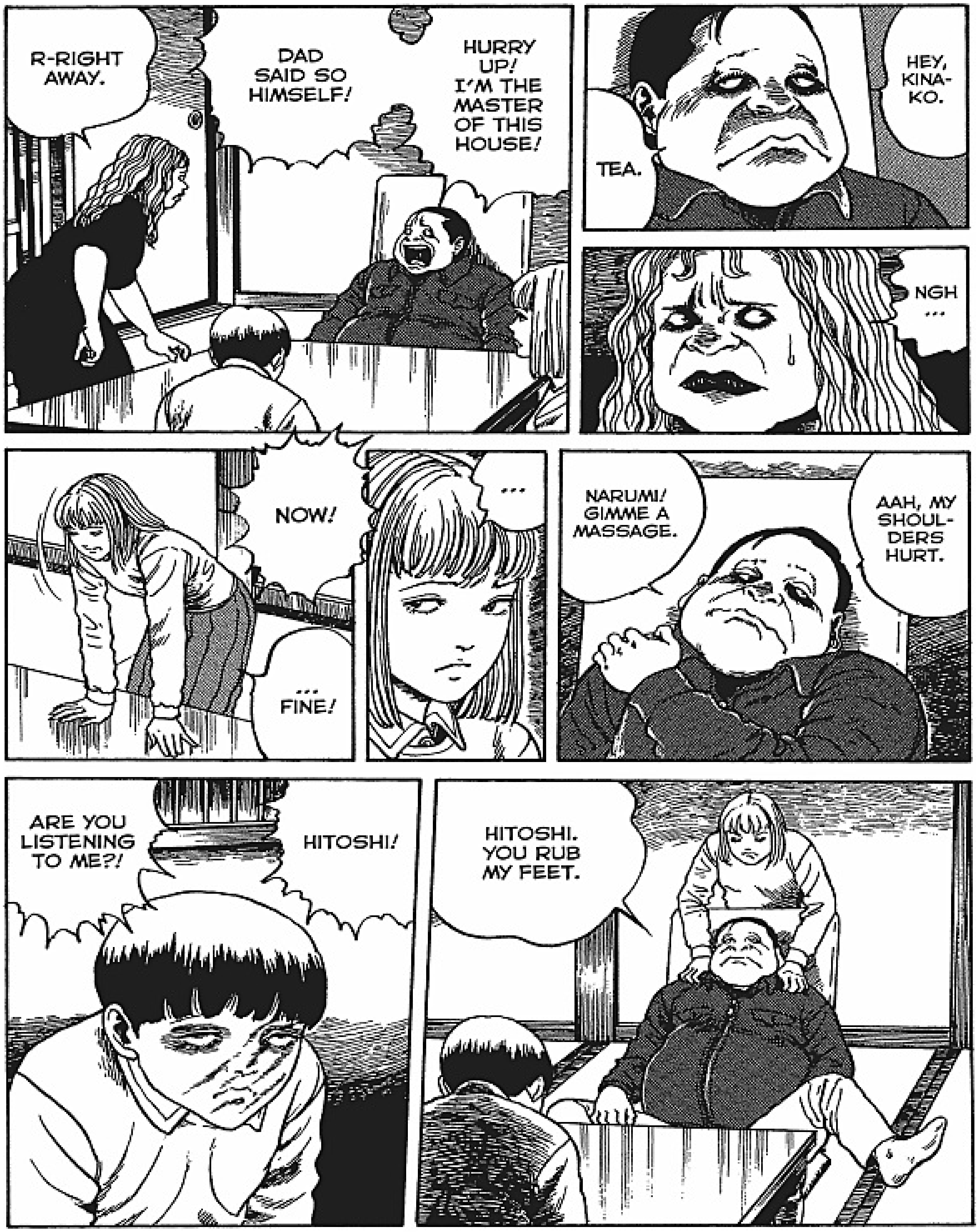

LATER, HITOSHI.
HA! TAKE THAT!
DAD? DAD?
HAAH, HAAH.
I FELT KIND OF SICK. AND THEN...
W- WHAT'S GOING ON?
AH!
HAAH ...

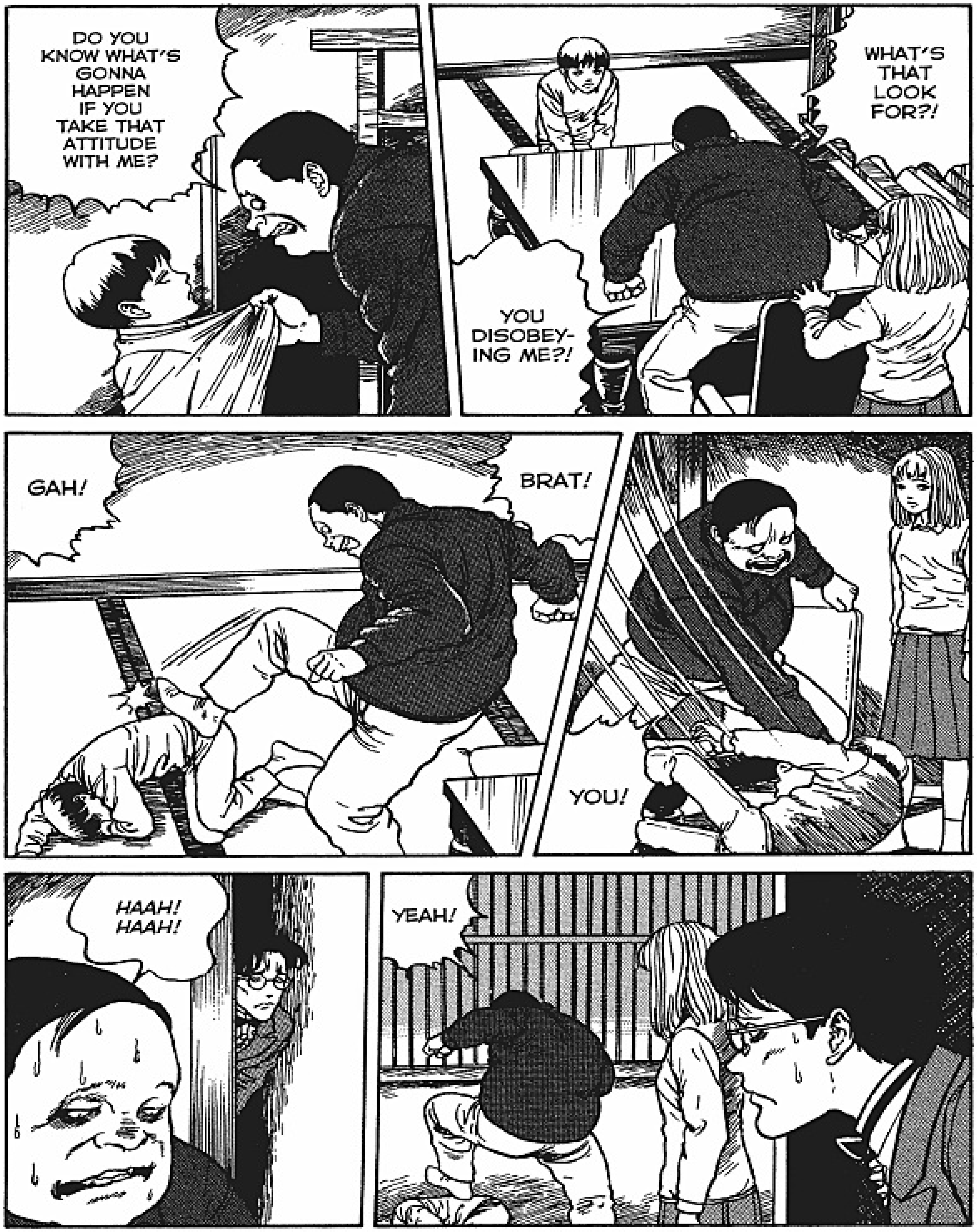

WHAT? YOU'RE BACK TO BEING SHIGORO?
YOU WERE POSSESSED BY DAD JUST NOW.
KAZUYA'S LEFT HOME.
WHAAAAT?! REALLY?!
IS THAT THE ECTOPLASM?
GAAAAAAAH!
HUH? WHAT'S WRONG, MISAKO?
GAAAAAAAH!
WHERE'S MOM?!
ISN'T MOM GOING TO COME?!

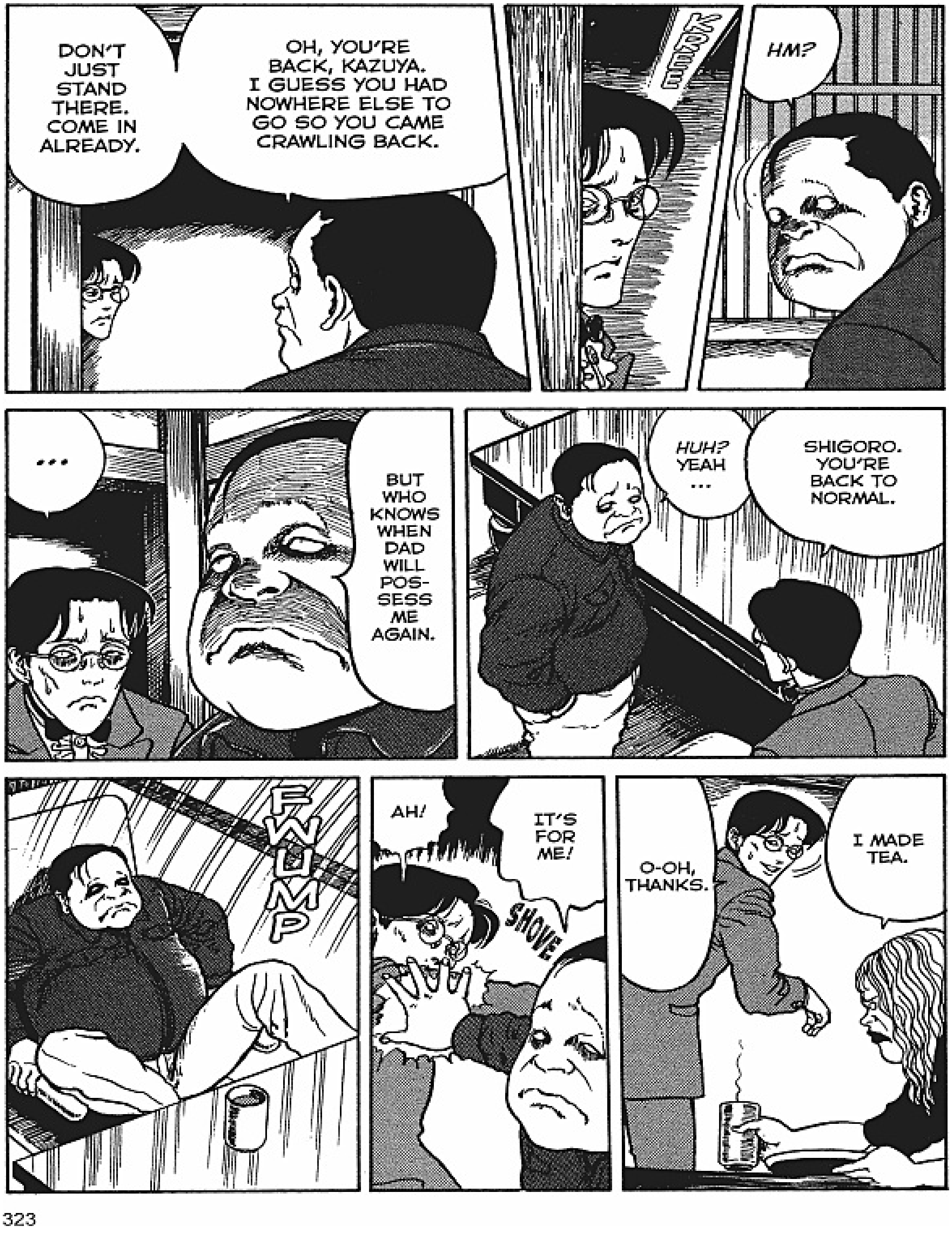

DON'T START SCREAMING ABOUT THAT.
GAAAAH!
FINE... OH! THAT ECTOPLASM MIGHT TURN INTO MOM SOON. SO YOU GOTTA STOP CRYING.
REALLY ?!
YEAH. TAKE IT BACK TO YOUR ROOM AND CALL HER.
I'M SURE MOM'LL SHOW.
ALL RIGHT! KEE KEE KEE KEE KEE!
SACHIYO. I'M SORRY YOU HAD TO SEE THAT. HOW EMBARRASSING. HEE HEE HEE...
BUT, WELL, SHOOT... IT SEEMS LIKE I'VE GOT SPIRITUAL POWERS. IF YOU'D LIKE, I CAN HELP WITH YOUR SPIRIT RESEARCH.

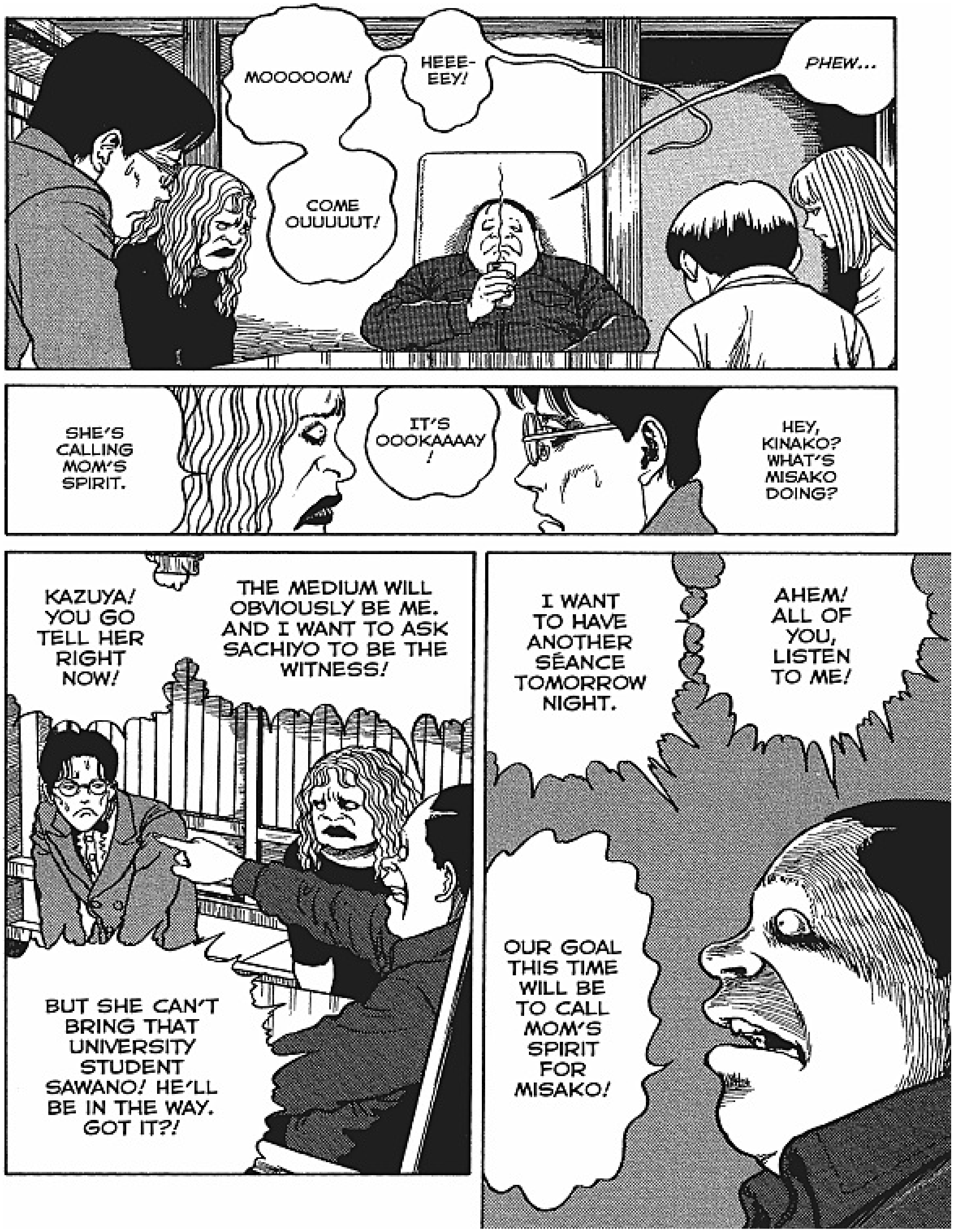

THAT WAS AMAZING, *HUH?*
YEAH.
I DIDN'T SEE ANY OF THAT COMING. THE YOUNGER BROTHER HAVING THE SPIRIT POWER INSTEAD OF THE OLDEST, THE ECTOPLASM THAT DIDN'T ACTUALLY DO ANYTHING.
BUT I GOT A VALUABLE SAMPLE. I SECRETLY GRABBED A BIT IN MY HANDKERCHIEF.
WHAT? YOU GOT SOME ECTOPLASM?!
YES! I'LL ANALYZE THE COMPOSITION AT MY LAB.
THE TRUE NATURE OF ECTOPLASM'S STILL A MYSTERY.
WE MIGHT BE ABLE TO FIGURE IT OUT WITH THIS SAMPLE.

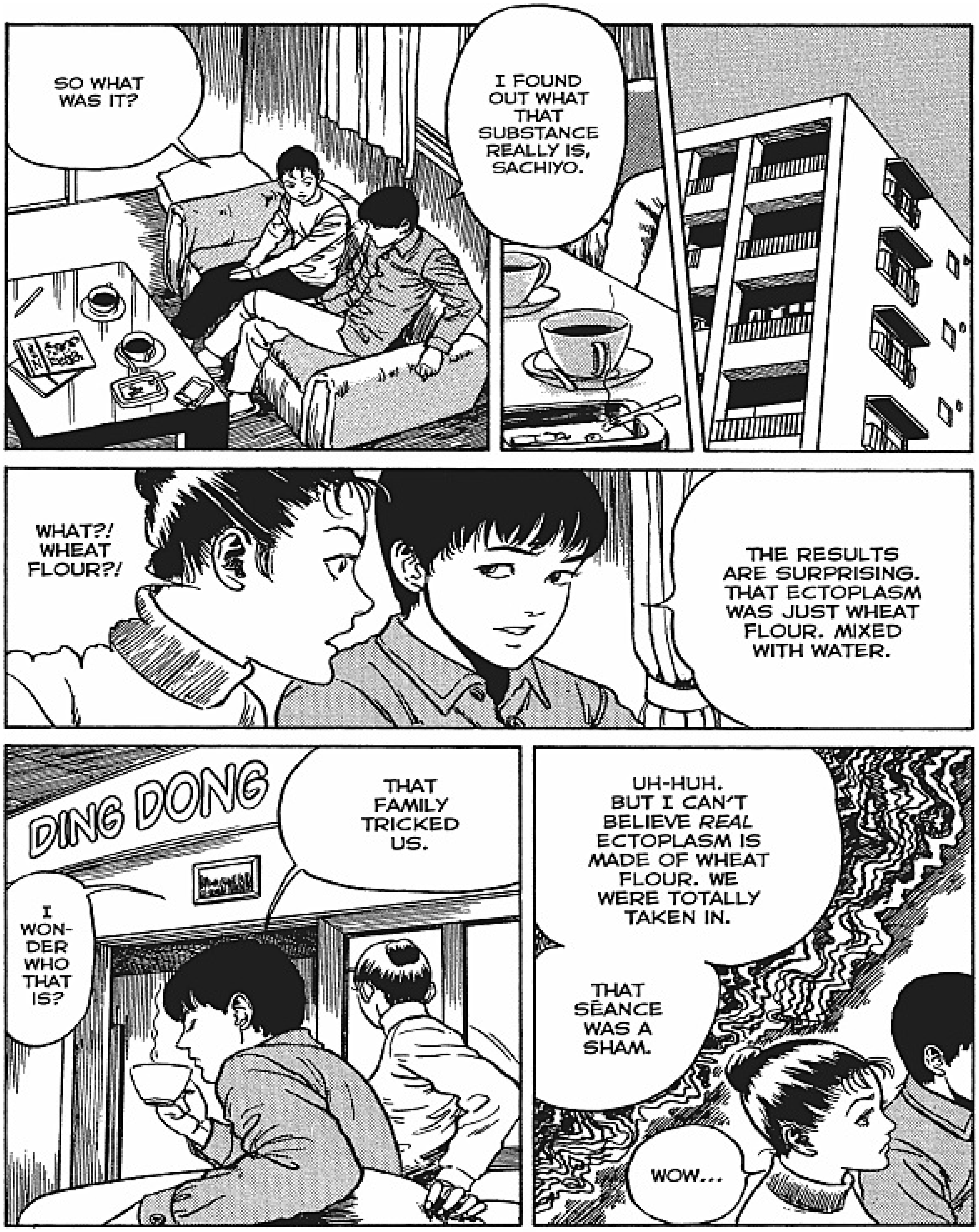

MOOOO-OOOOM!
IT'S OKAA-AAAY!
YOU CAN COME OUT!
COME OOO-OON!
HURRY UUUUP!
HEEEEEY!
IT'S OKAAA-AAAY!
...

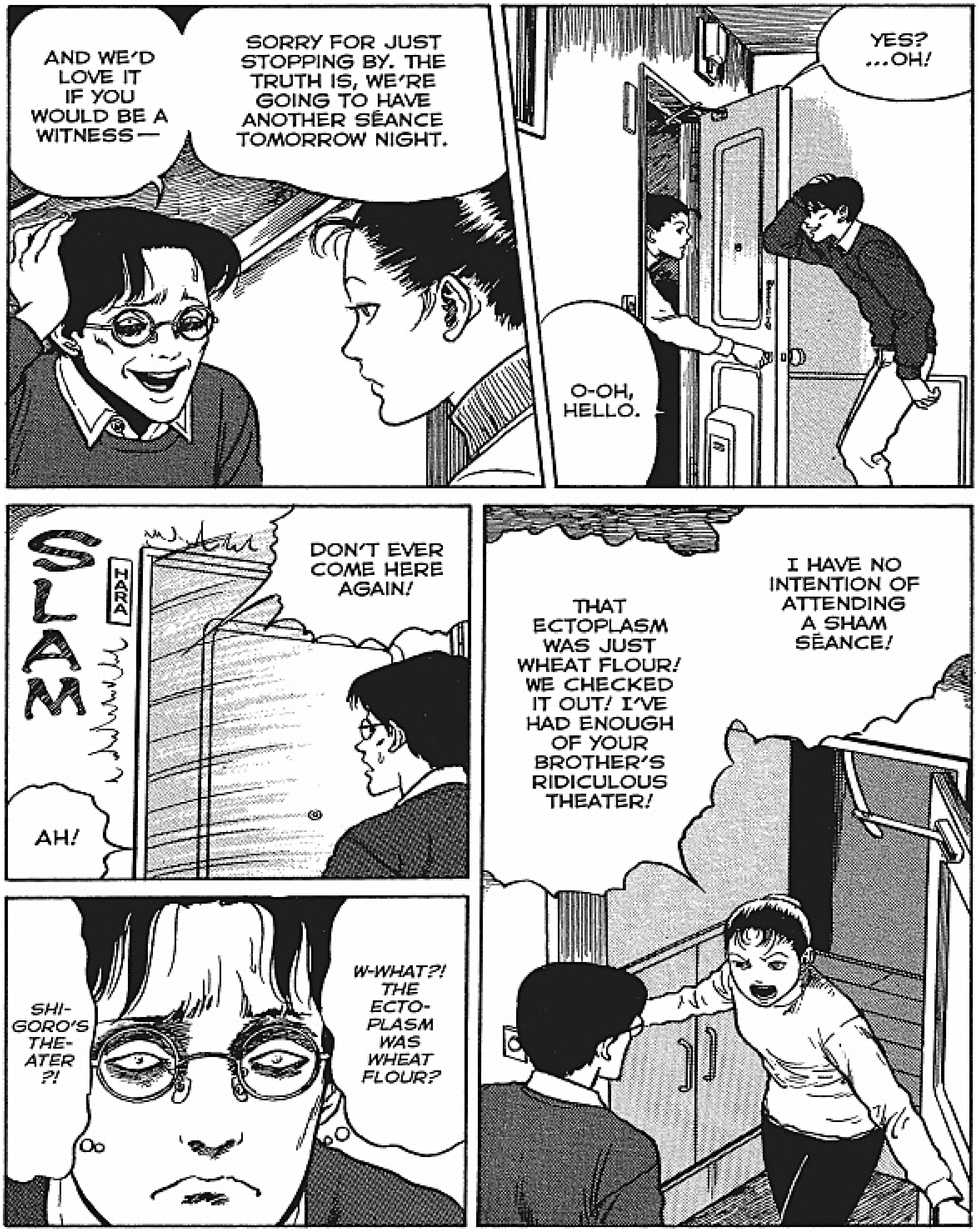

HEY, KINAKO.
TEA.
NGH...
HURRY UP! I'M THE MASTER OF THIS HOUSE!
DAD SAID SO HIMSELF!
R-RIGHT AWAY.
AAH, MY SHOULDERS HURT.
NARUMI! GIMME A MASSAGE.
...
NOW!
...FINE!
HITOSHI. YOU RUB MY FEET.
HITOSHI!
ARE YOU LISTENING TO ME?!

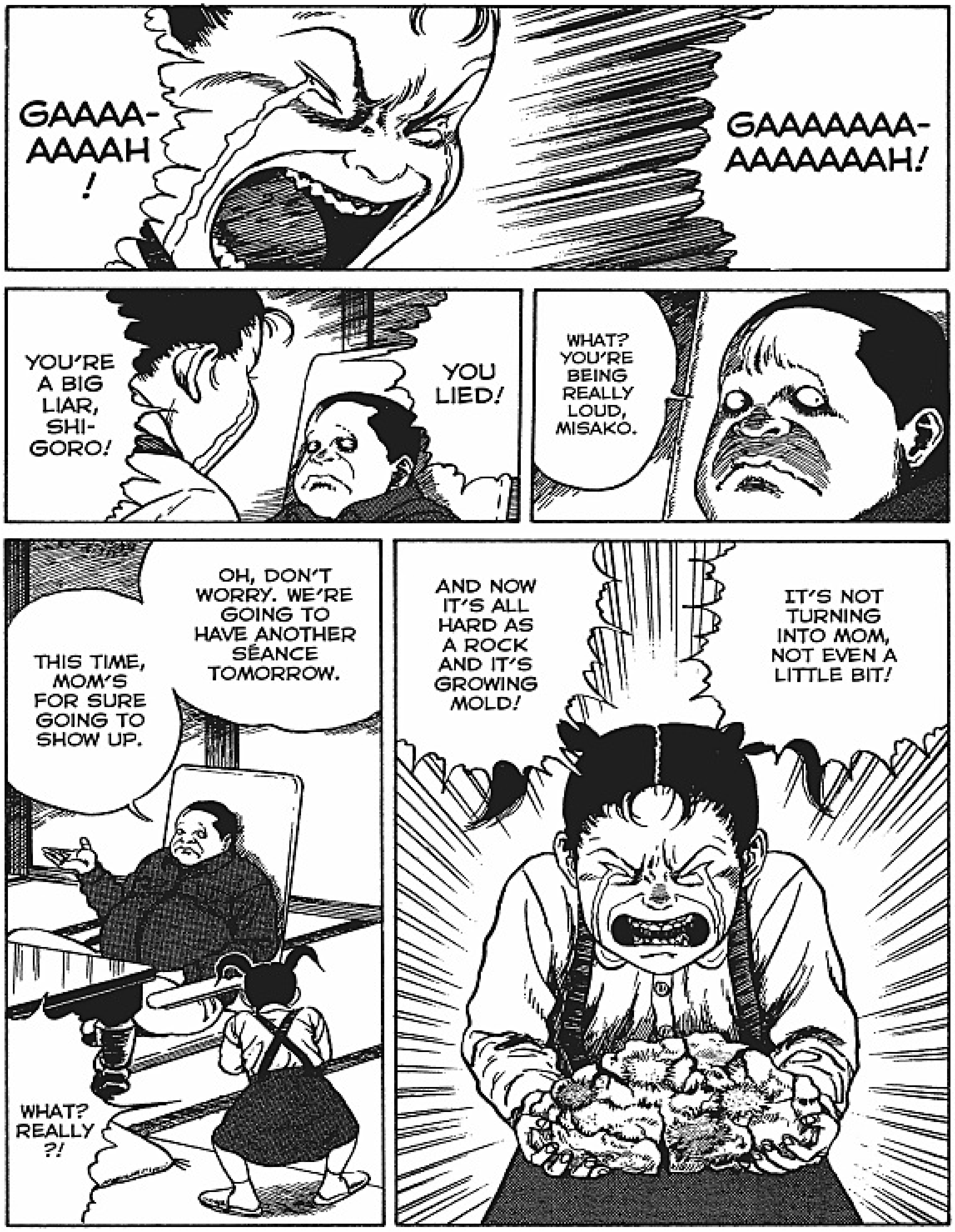

WHAT'S THAT LOOK FOR?!
YOU DISOBEYING ME?!
DO YOU KNOW WHAT'S GONNA HAPPEN IF YOU TAKE THAT ATTITUDE WITH ME?
YOU!
BRAT!
GAH!
YEAH!
HAAH! HAAH!

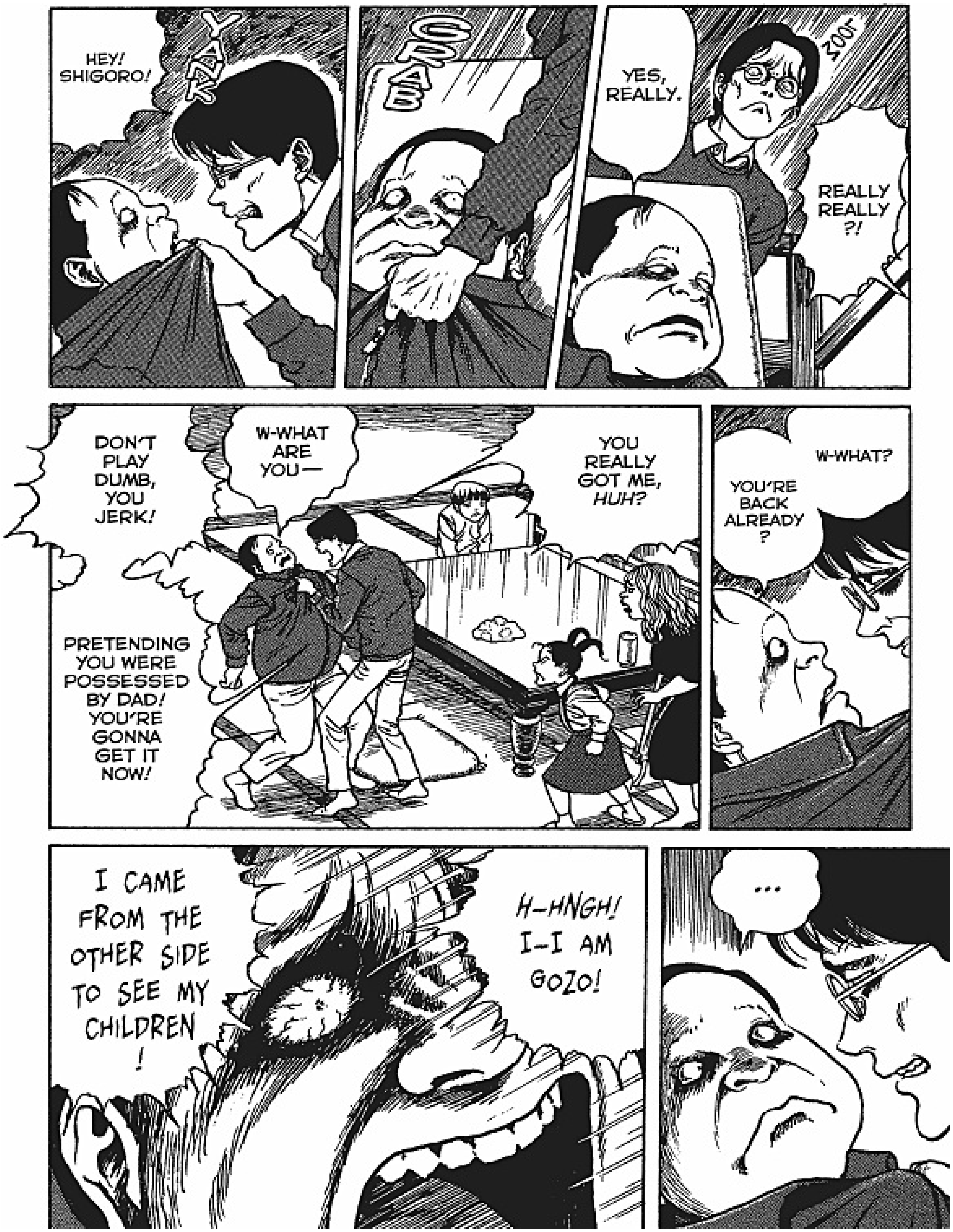

HM?
OH, YOU'RE BACK, KAZUYA. I GUESS YOU HAD NOWHERE ELSE TO GO SO YOU CAME CRAWLING BACK.
DON'T JUST STAND THERE. COME IN ALREADY.
SHIGORO. YOU'RE BACK TO NORMAL.
HUH? YEAH ...
BUT WHO KNOWS WHEN DAD WILL POSSESS ME AGAIN.
...
I MADE TEA.
O-OH, THANKS.
IT'S FOR ME!
SHOVE
AH!
FWUMP

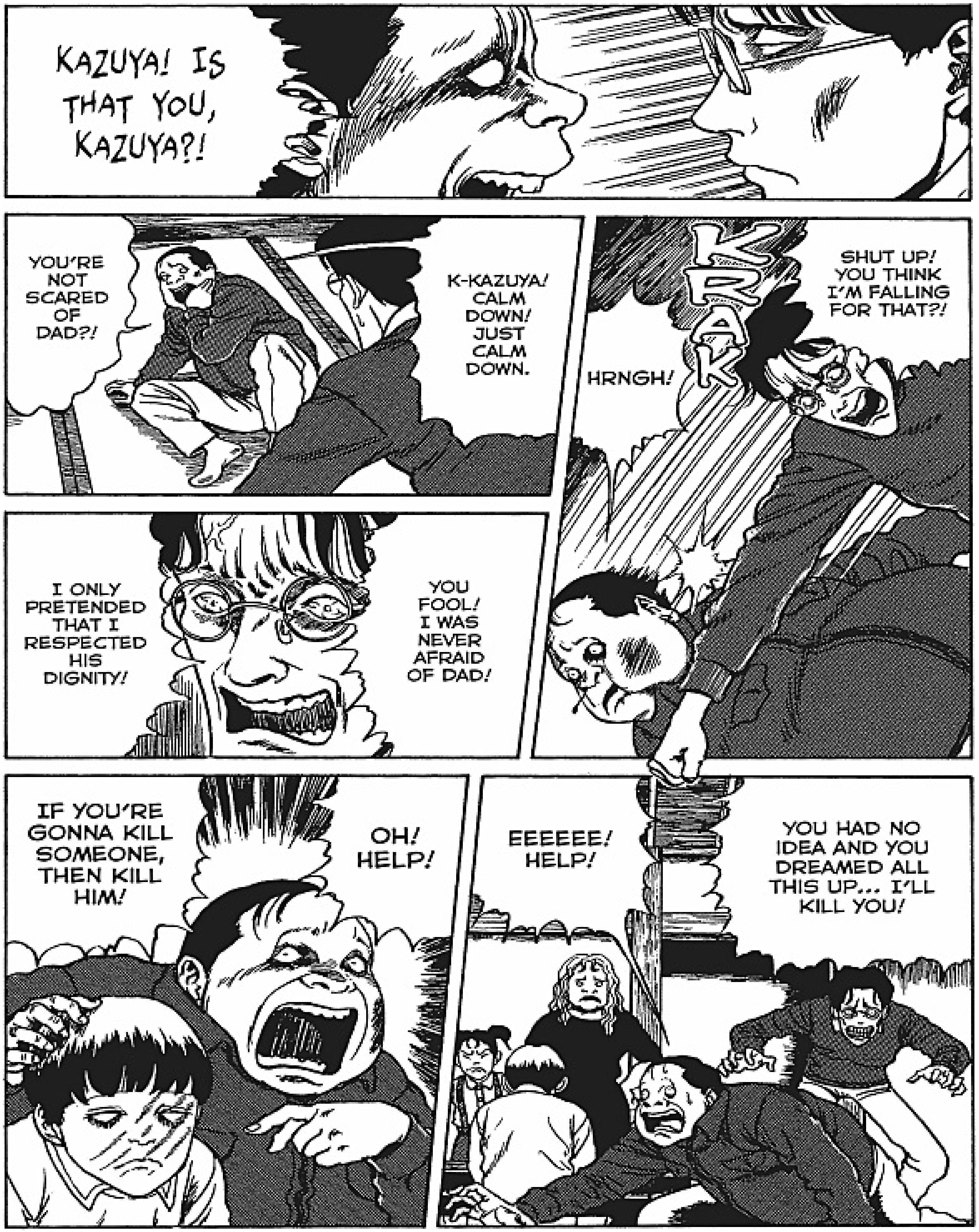

PHEW...
HEEEE-EEY!
MOOOOOM!
COME OUUUUUT!
HEY, KINAKO? WHAT'S MISAKO DOING?
IT'S OOOKAAAAY!
SHE'S CALLING MOM'S SPIRIT.
AHEM! ALL OF YOU, LISTEN TO ME!
I WANT TO HAVE ANOTHER SÉANCE TOMORROW NIGHT.
OUR GOAL THIS TIME WILL BE TO CALL MOM'S SPIRIT FOR MISAKO!
THE MEDIUM WILL OBVIOUSLY BE ME. AND I WANT TO ASK SACHIYO TO BE THE WITNESS!
KAZUYA! YOU GO TELL HER RIGHT NOW!
BUT SHE CAN'T BRING THAT UNIVERSITY STUDENT SAWANO! HE'LL BE IN THE WAY. GOT IT?!

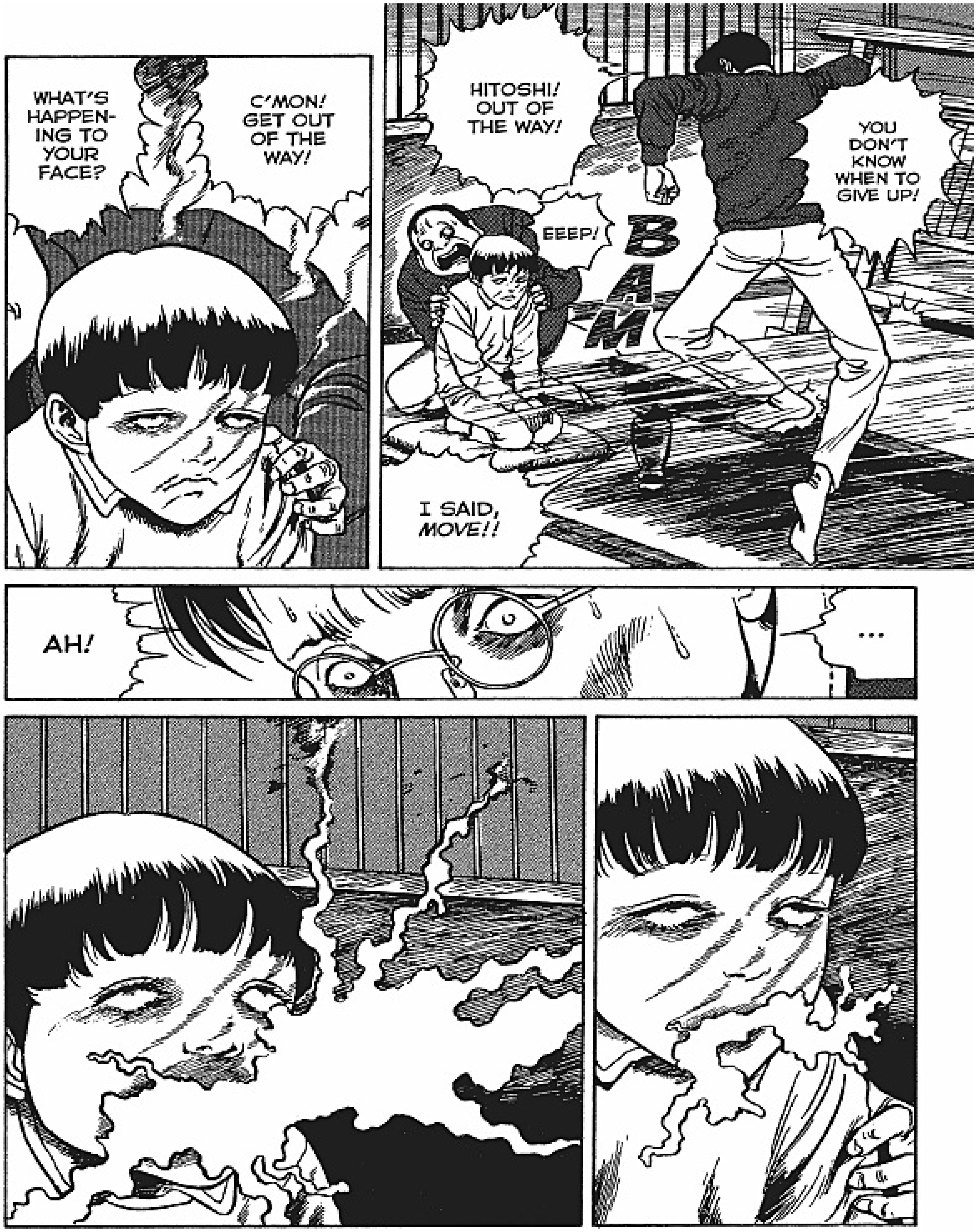

I FOUND OUT WHAT THAT SUBSTANCE REALLY IS, SACHIYO.
SO WHAT WAS IT?
THE RESULTS ARE SURPRISING. THAT ECTOPLASM WAS JUST WHEAT FLOUR. MIXED WITH WATER.
WHAT?! WHEAT FLOUR?!
UH-HUH. BUT I CAN'T BELIEVE *REAL* ECTOPLASM IS MADE OF WHEAT FLOUR. WE WERE TOTALLY TAKEN IN.
THAT SÉANCE WAS A SHAM.
WOW...
THAT FAMILY TRICKED US.
DING DONG
I WONDER WHO THAT IS?

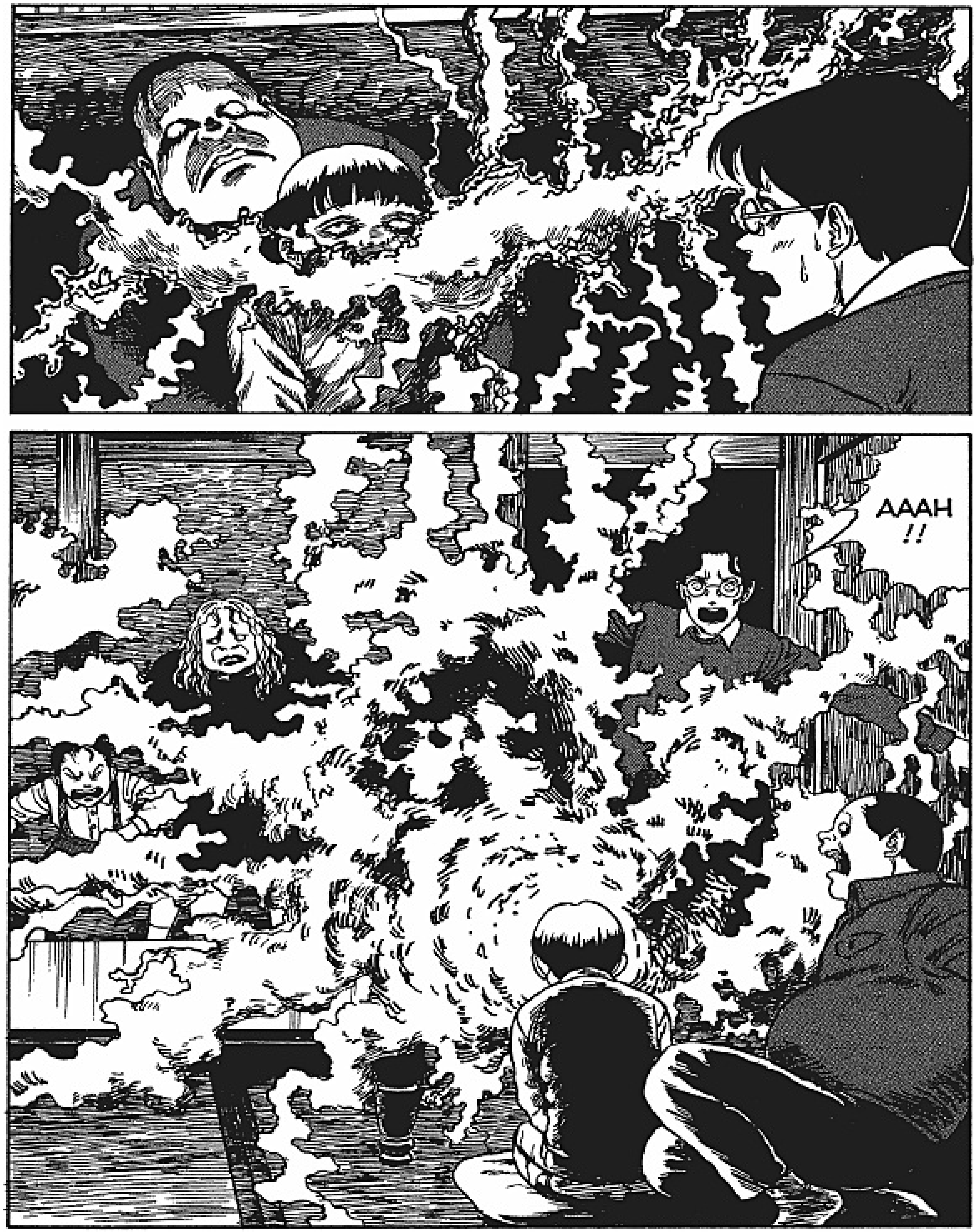

YES? ...OH!
O-OH, HELLO.
SORRY FOR JUST STOPPING BY. THE TRUTH IS, WE'RE GOING TO HAVE ANOTHER SÉANCE TOMORROW NIGHT.
AND WE'D LOVE IT IF YOU WOULD BE A WITNESS—
I HAVE NO INTENTION OF ATTENDING A SHAM SÉANCE!
THAT ECTOPLASM WAS JUST WHEAT FLOUR! WE CHECKED IT OUT! I'VE HAD ENOUGH OF YOUR BROTHER'S RIDICULOUS THEATER!
DON'T EVER COME HERE AGAIN!
HARA
SLAM
AH!
W-WHAT?! THE ECTOPLASM WAS WHEAT FLOUR?
SHIGORO'S THEATER?!

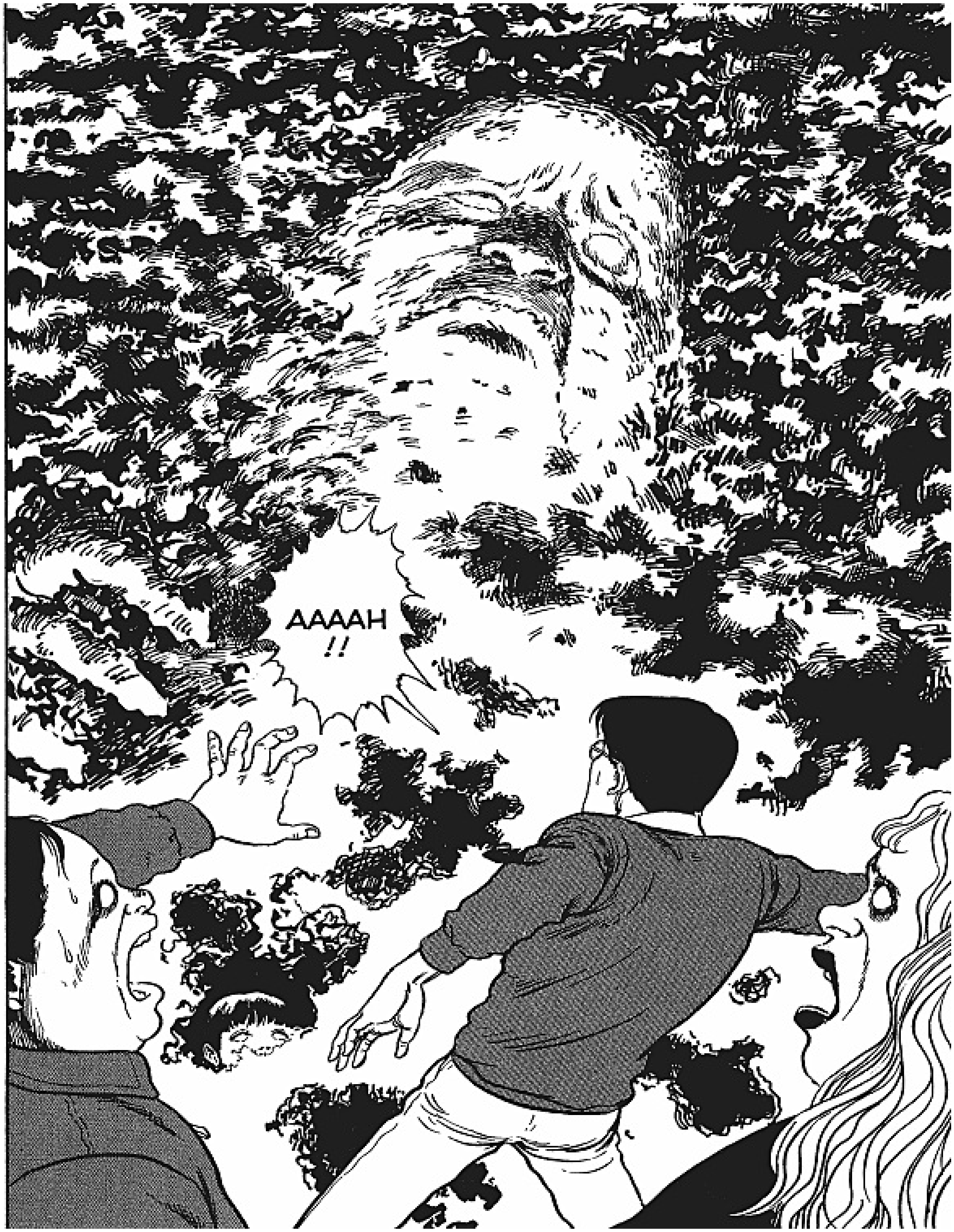

GAAAAAAA-AAAAAAAH!
GAAAA-AAAAH!
WHAT? YOU'RE BEING REALLY LOUD, MISAKO.
YOU LIED!
YOU'RE A BIG LIAR, SHIGORO!
IT'S NOT TURNING INTO MOM, NOT EVEN A LITTLE BIT!
AND NOW IT'S ALL HARD AS A ROCK AND IT'S GROWING MOLD!
OH, DON'T WORRY. WE'RE GOING TO HAVE ANOTHER SÉANCE TOMORROW.
THIS TIME, MOM'S FOR SURE GOING TO SHOW UP.
WHAT? REALLY?!

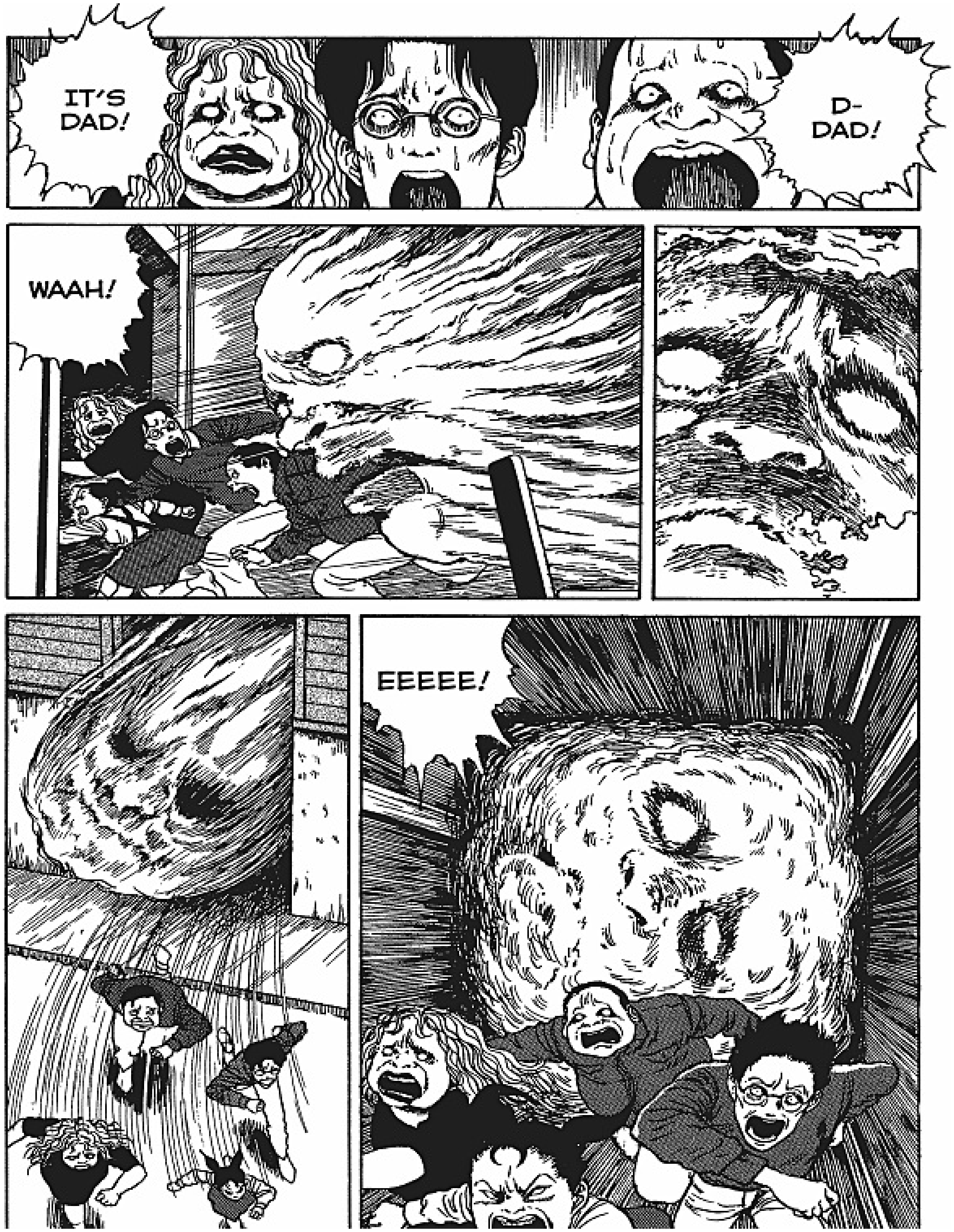

REALLY REALLY ?!
YES, REALLY.
ZOOM
GRAB
YANK
HEY! SHIGORO!
YOU'RE BACK ALREADY ?
W-WHAT?
YOU REALLY GOT ME, *HUH?*
W-WHAT ARE YOU—
DON'T PLAY DUMB, YOU JERK!
PRETENDING YOU WERE POSSESSED BY DAD! YOU'RE GONNA GET IT NOW!
...
H-HNGH! I-I AM GOZO!
I CAME FROM THE OTHER SIDE TO SEE MY CHILDREN !

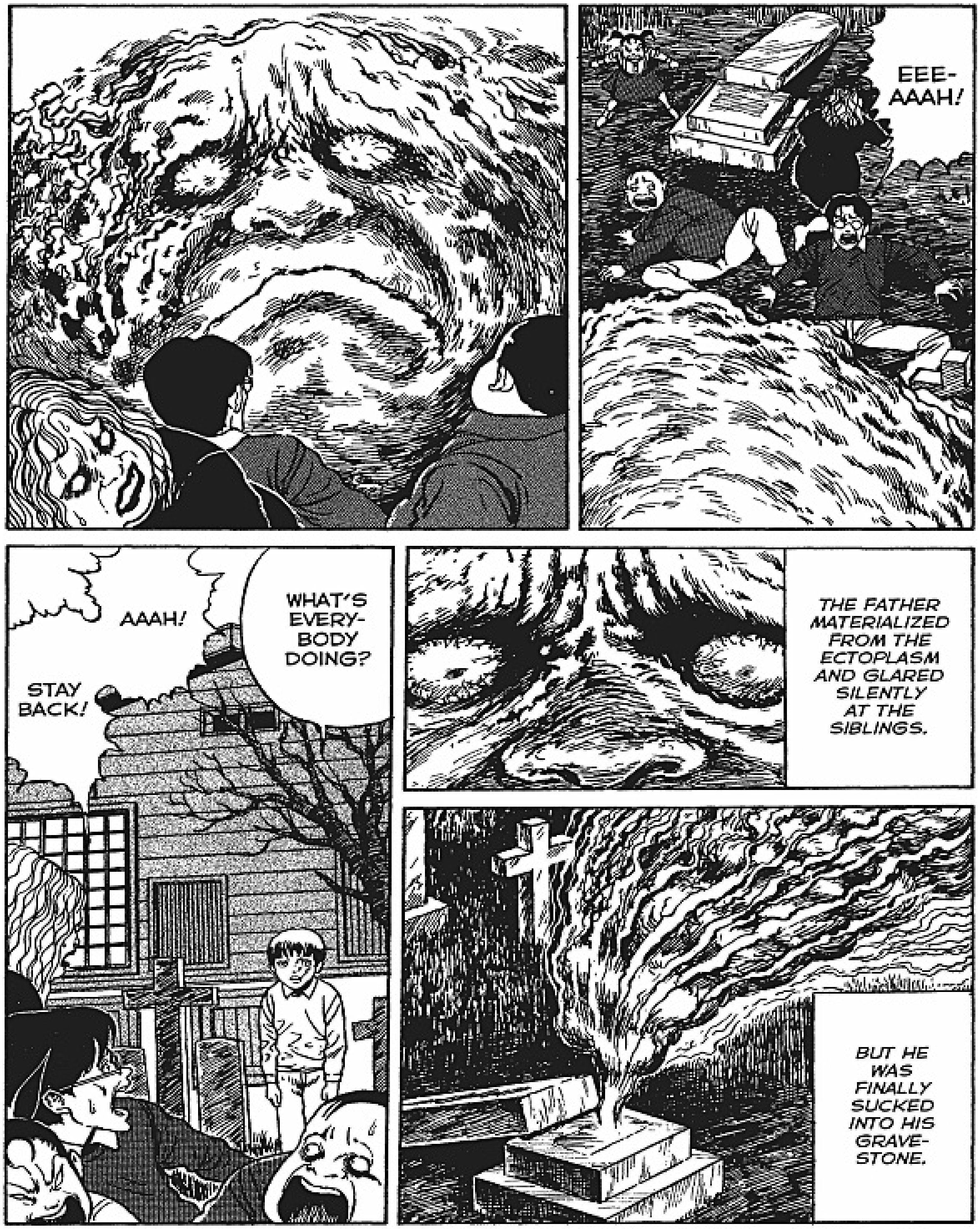

KAZUYA! IS THAT YOU, KAZUYA?!
SHUT UP! YOU THINK I'M FALLING FOR THAT?!
KRAK
HRNGH!
K-KAZUYA! CALM DOWN! JUST CALM DOWN.
YOU'RE NOT SCARED OF DAD?!
YOU FOOL! I WAS NEVER AFRAID OF DAD!
I ONLY PRETENDED THAT I RESPECTED HIS DIGNITY!
YOU HAD NO IDEA AND YOU DREAMED ALL THIS UP... I'LL KILL YOU!
EEEEEE! HELP!
OH! HELP!
IF YOU'RE GONNA KILL SOMEONE, THEN KILL HIM!


WHAT'S HAPPENING TO YOUR FACE?
C'MON! GET OUT OF THE WAY!
HITOSHI! OUT OF THE WAY!
YOU DON'T KNOW WHEN TO GIVE UP!
EEEP!
BAM
I SAID, *MOVE!!*
AH!
...

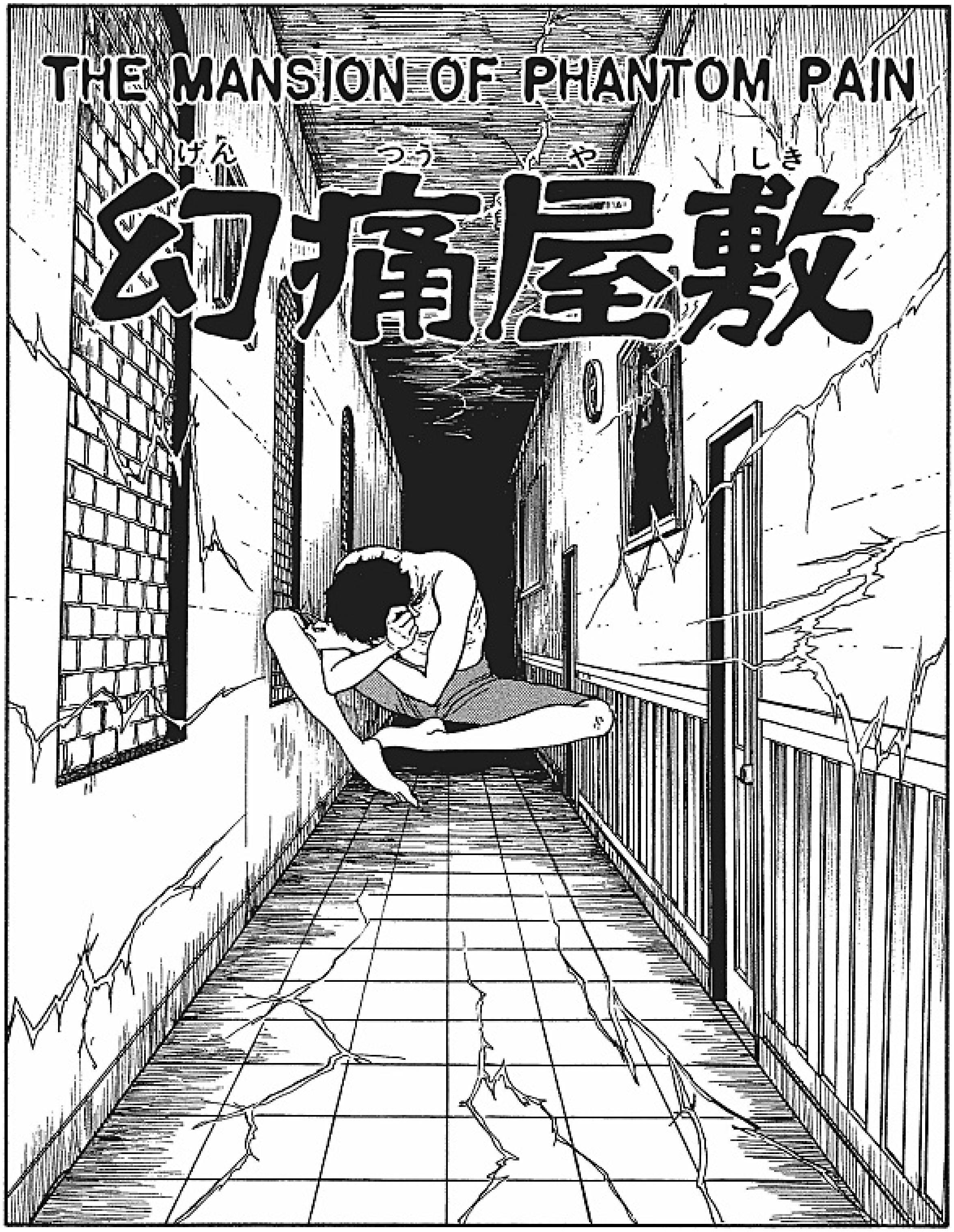

AAAH !!

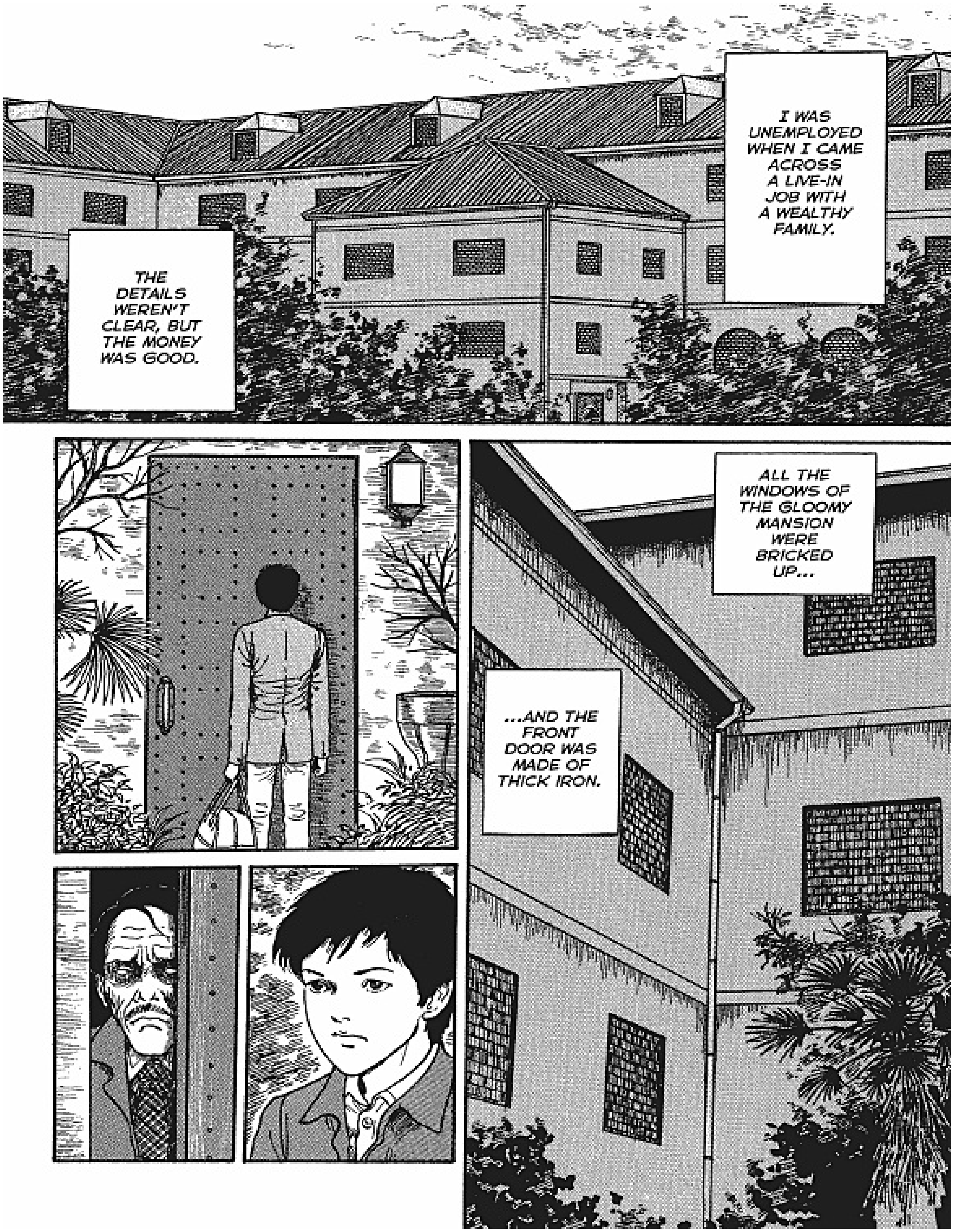

AAAAH !!

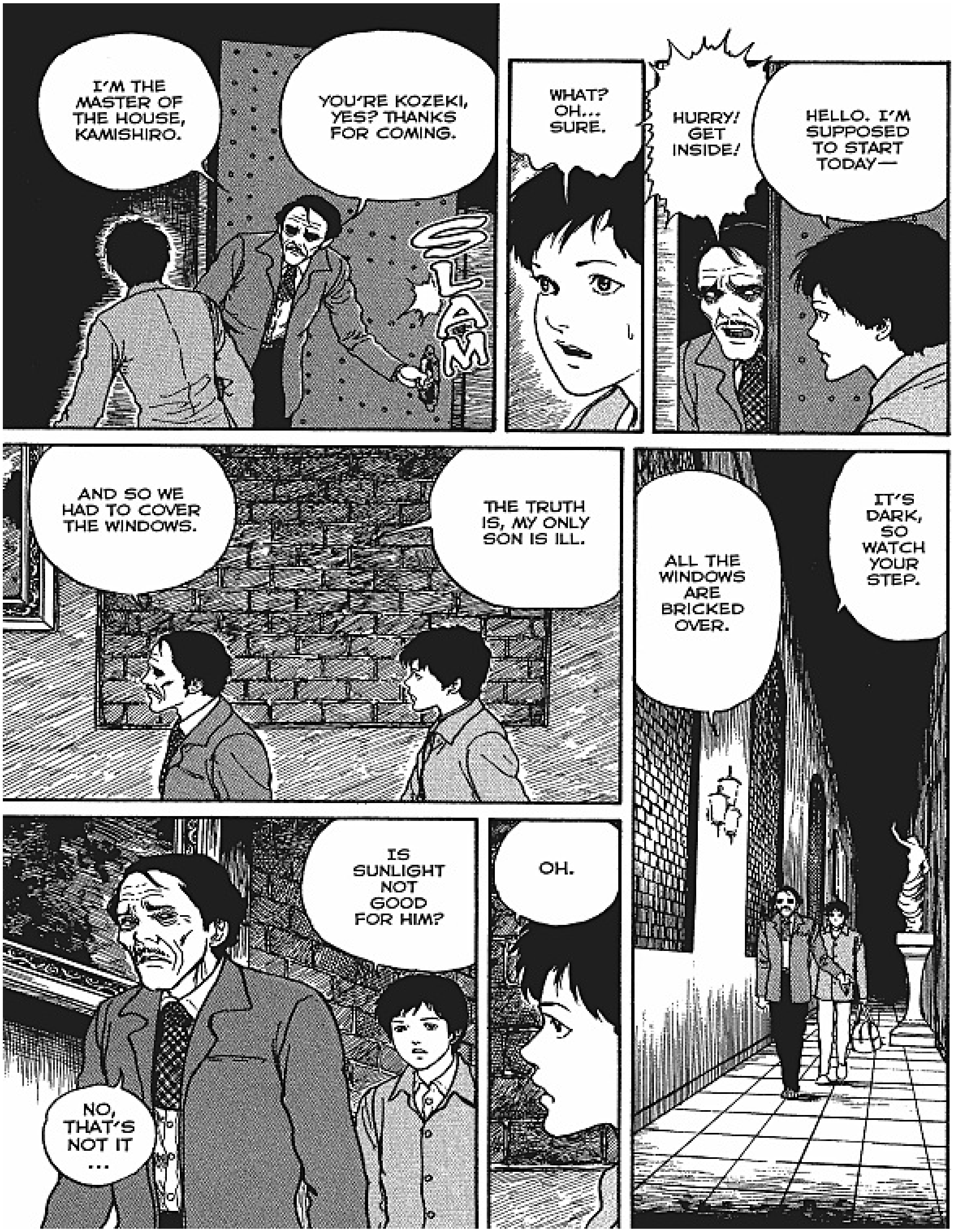

D-
DAD!
IT'S
DAD!
WAAH!
EEEEE!

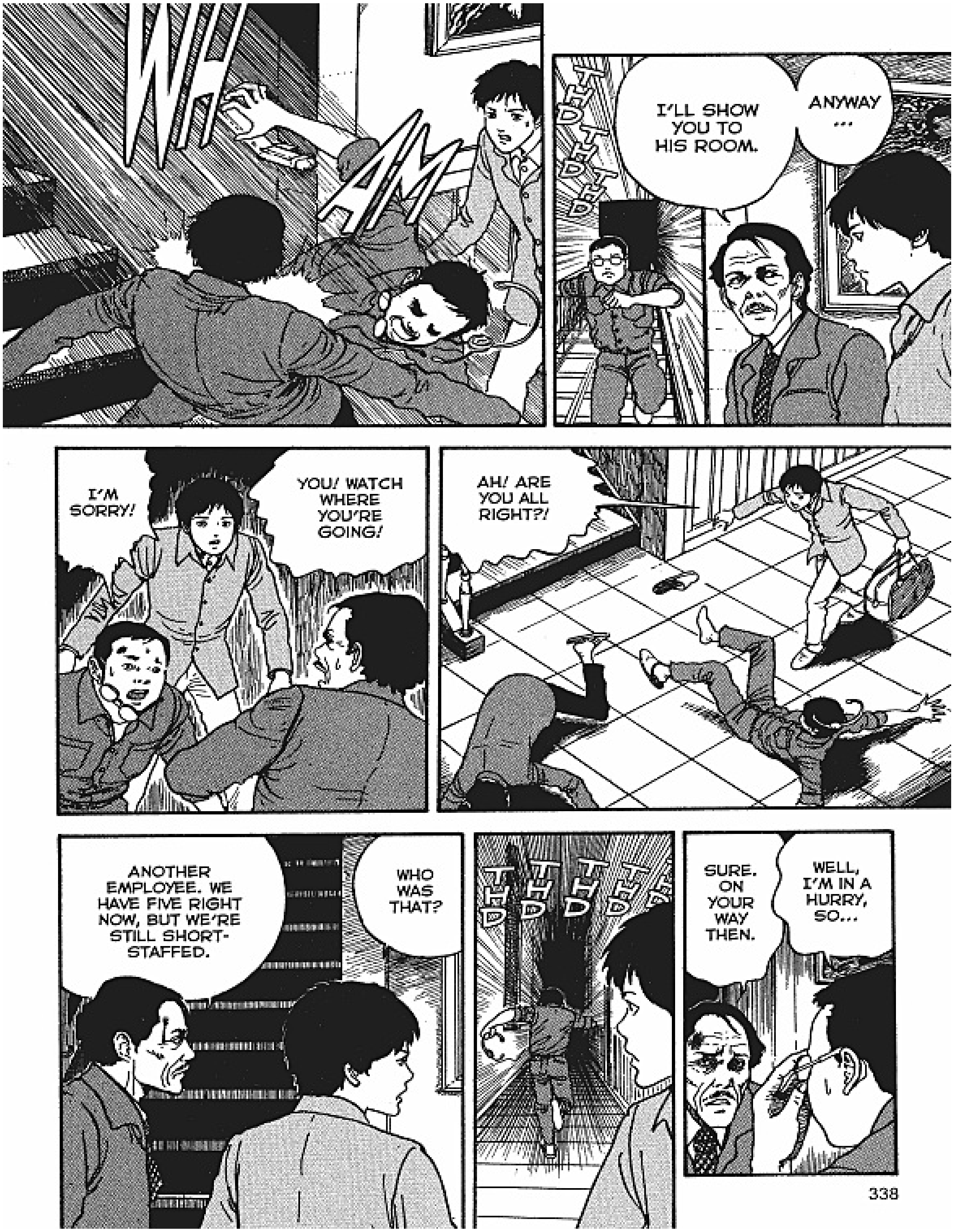

EEE-AAAH!
THE FATHER MATERIALIZED FROM THE ECTOPLASM AND GLARED SILENTLY AT THE SIBLINGS.
BUT HE WAS FINALLY SUCKED INTO HIS GRAVESTONE.
WHAT'S EVERYBODY DOING?
AAAH!
STAY BACK!

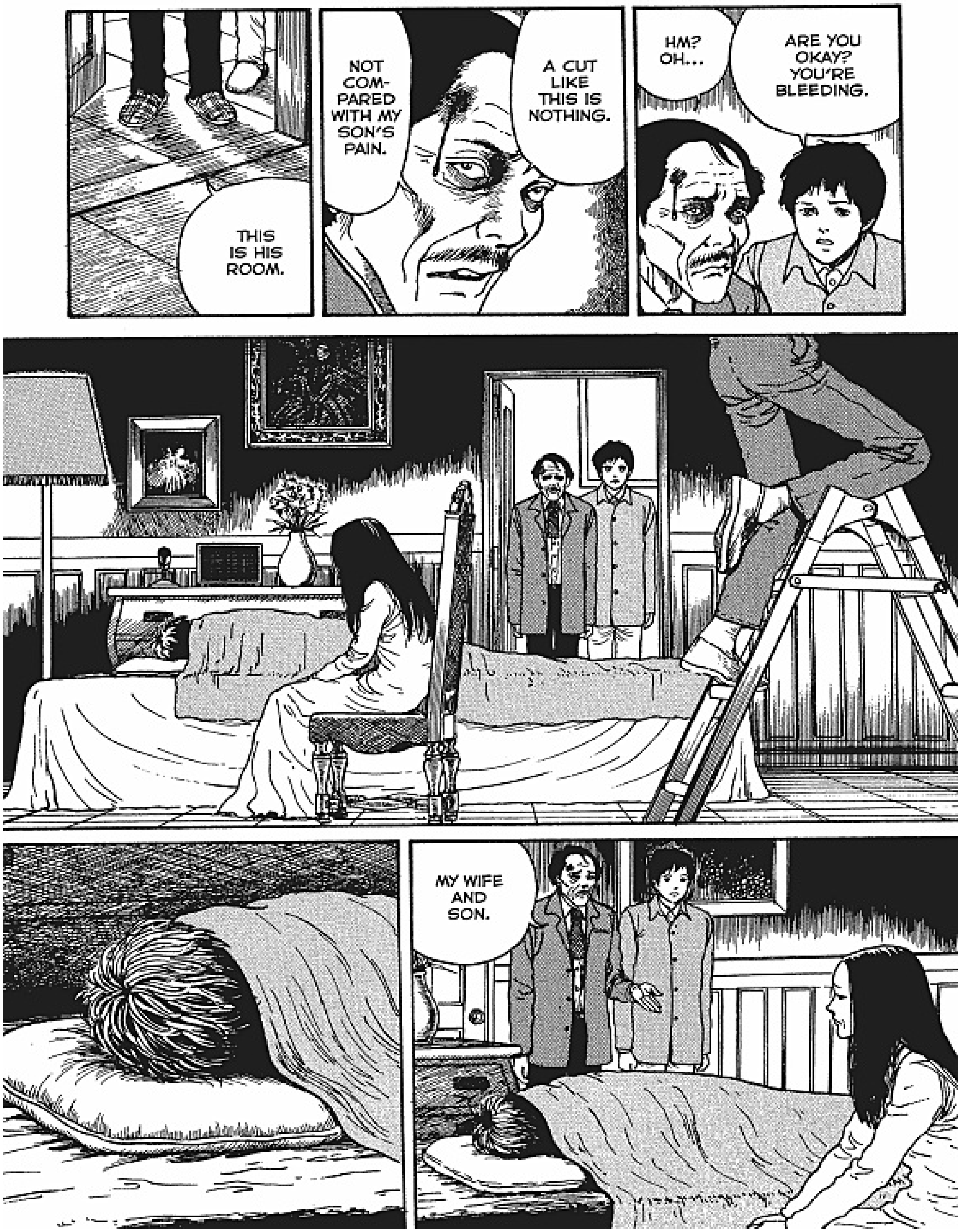
THE SÉANCE/END

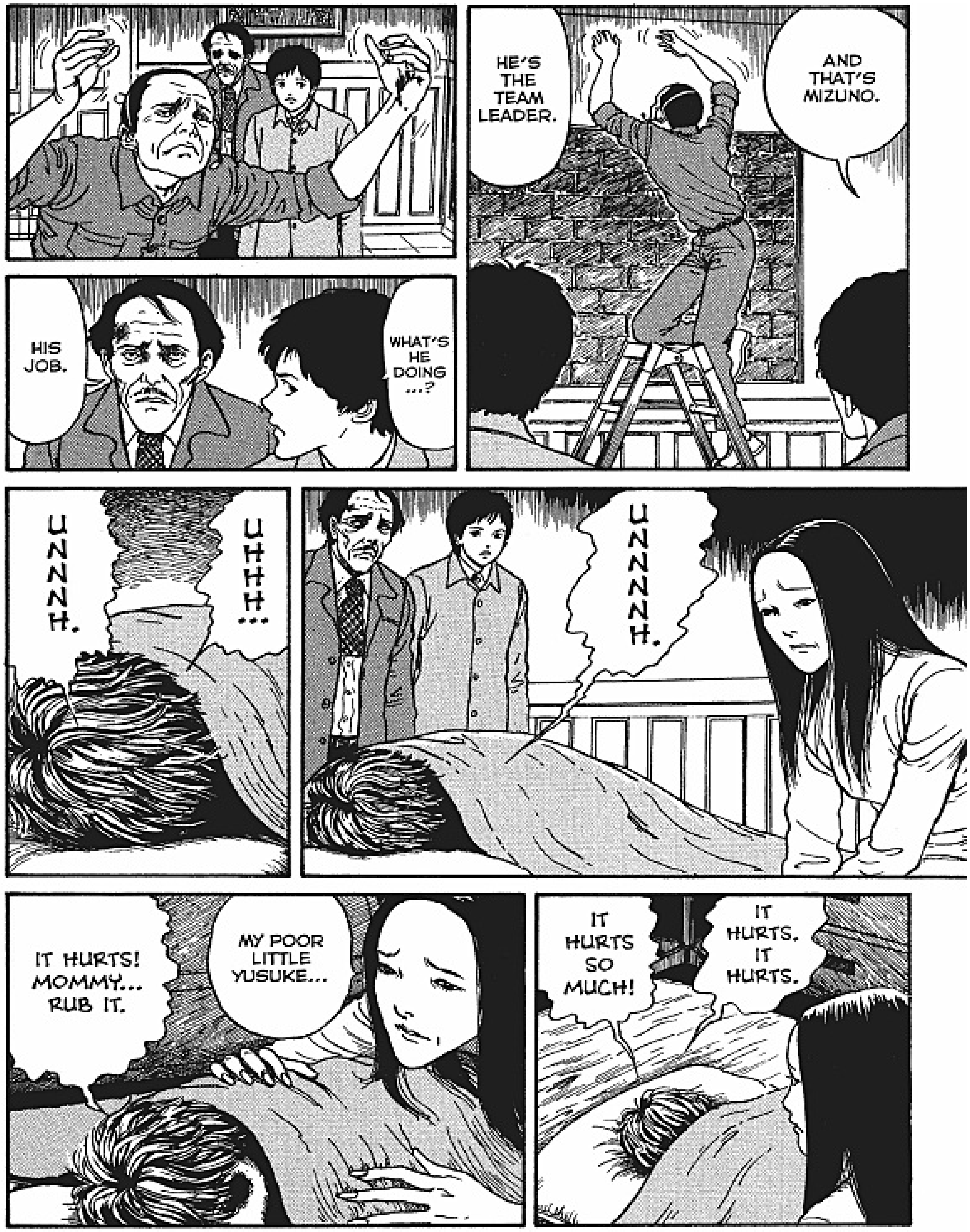

THE MANSION OF PHANTOM PAIN
げん つう や しき
幻痛屋敷

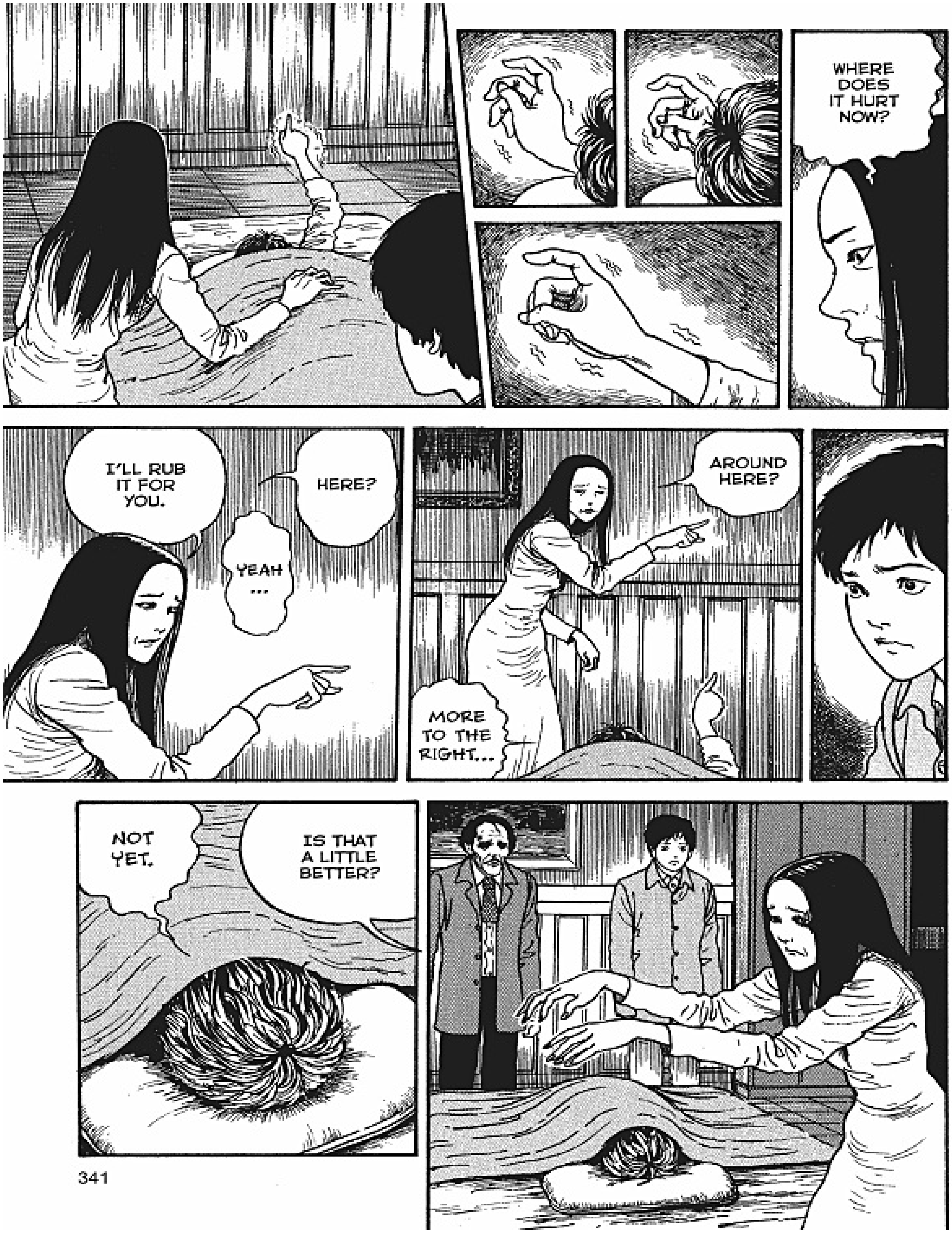

I WAS UNEMPLOYED WHEN I CAME ACROSS A LIVE-IN JOB WITH A WEALTHY FAMILY.
THE DETAILS WEREN'T CLEAR, BUT THE MONEY WAS GOOD.
ALL THE WINDOWS OF THE GLOOMY MANSION WERE BRICKED UP...
...AND THE FRONT DOOR WAS MADE OF THICK IRON.

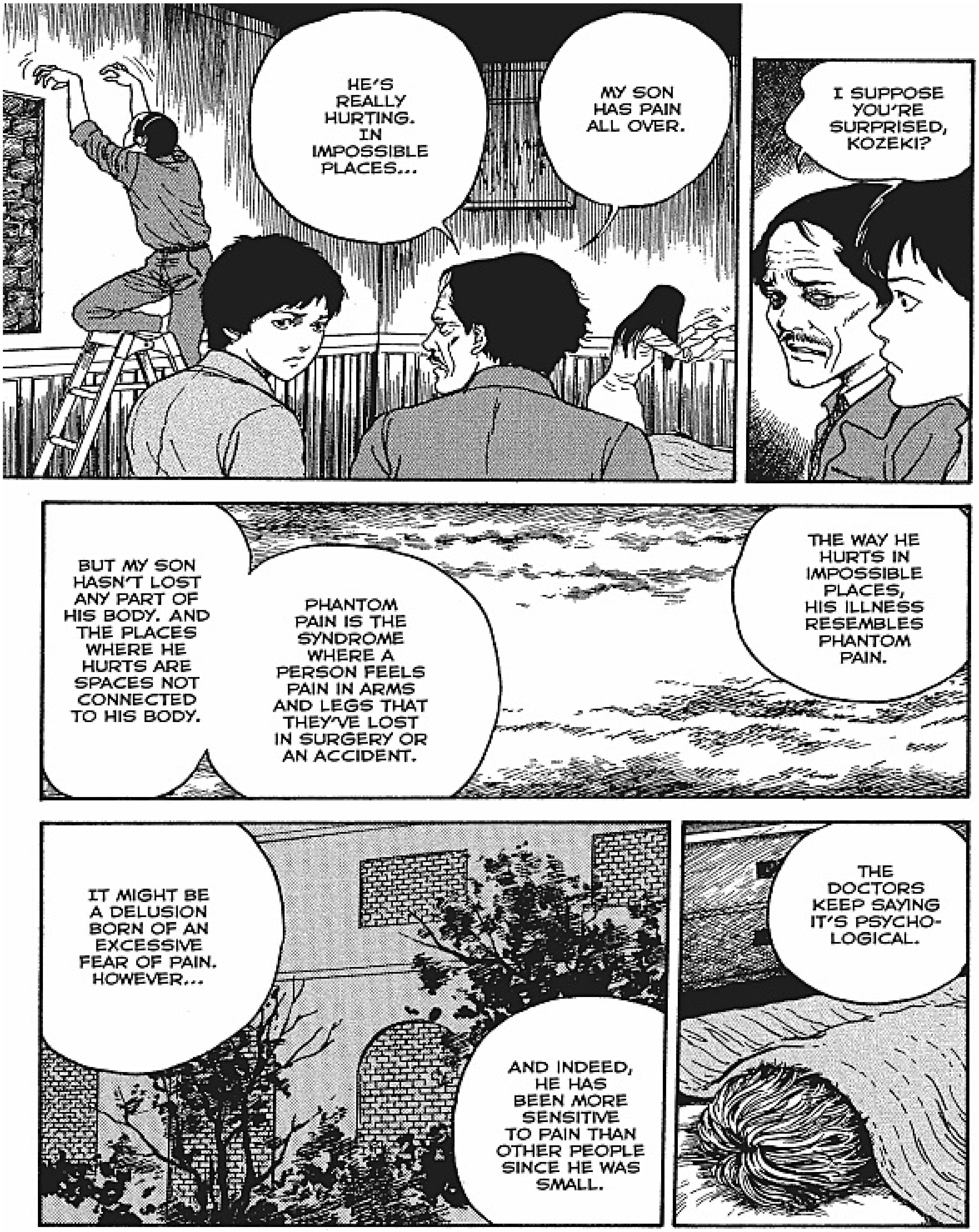

HELLO. I'M SUPPOSED TO START TODAY—
HURRY! GET INSIDE!
WHAT? OH... SURE.
SLAM
YOU'RE KOZEKI, YES? THANKS FOR COMING.
I'M THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE, KAMISHIRO.
IT'S DARK, SO WATCH YOUR STEP.
ALL THE WINDOWS ARE BRICKED OVER.
THE TRUTH IS, MY ONLY SON IS ILL.
AND SO WE HAD TO COVER THE WINDOWS.
OH.
IS SUNLIGHT NOT GOOD FOR HIM?
NO, THAT'S NOT IT ...

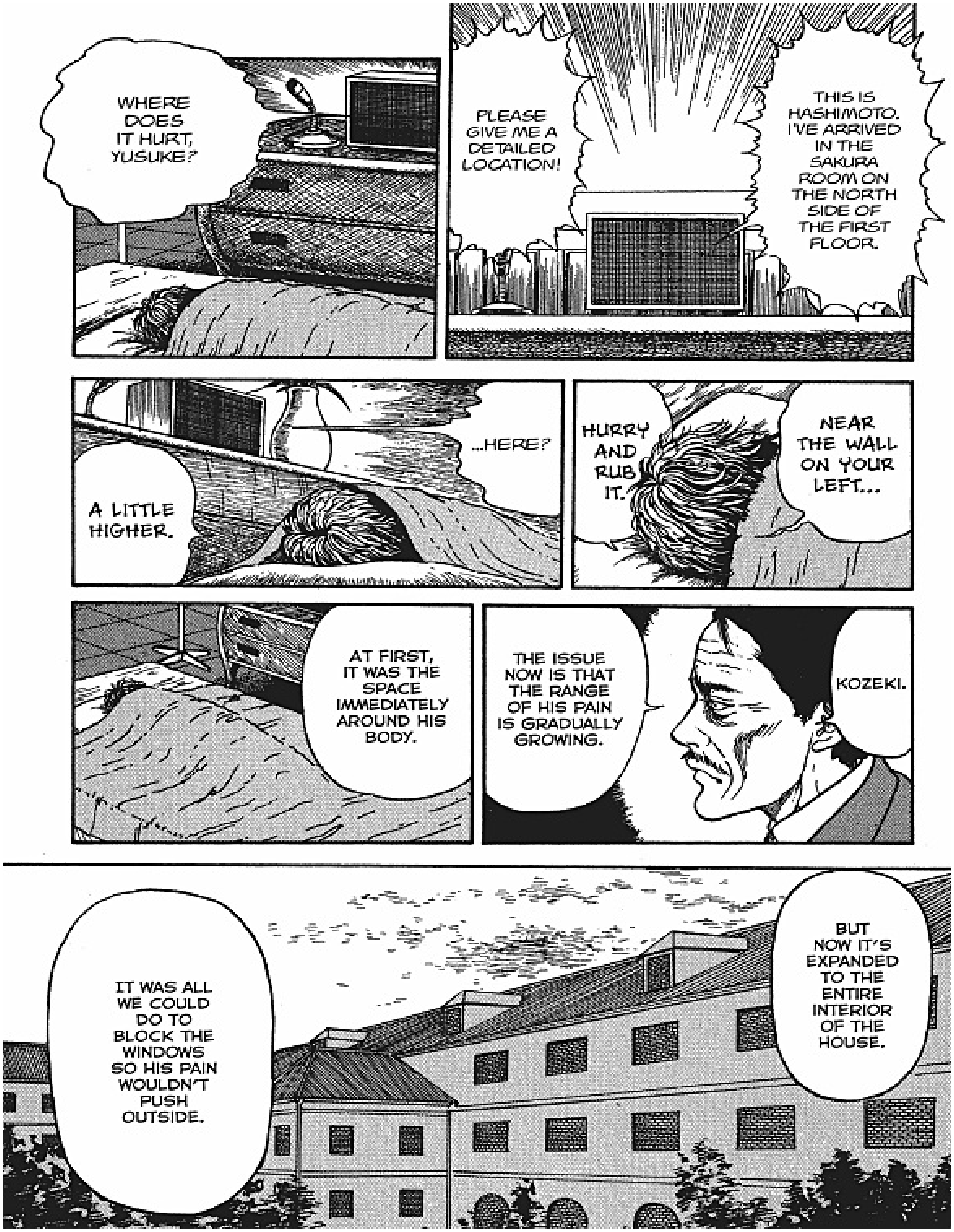

ANYWAY ...
I'LL SHOW YOU TO HIS ROOM.
THD THD THD
WHAM
AH! ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?!
YOU! WATCH WHERE YOU'RE GOING!
I'M SORRY!
WELL, I'M IN A HURRY, SO...
SURE. ON YOUR WAY THEN.
THD THD THD THD
WHO WAS THAT?
ANOTHER EMPLOYEE. WE HAVE FIVE RIGHT NOW, BUT WE'RE STILL SHORT-STAFFED.

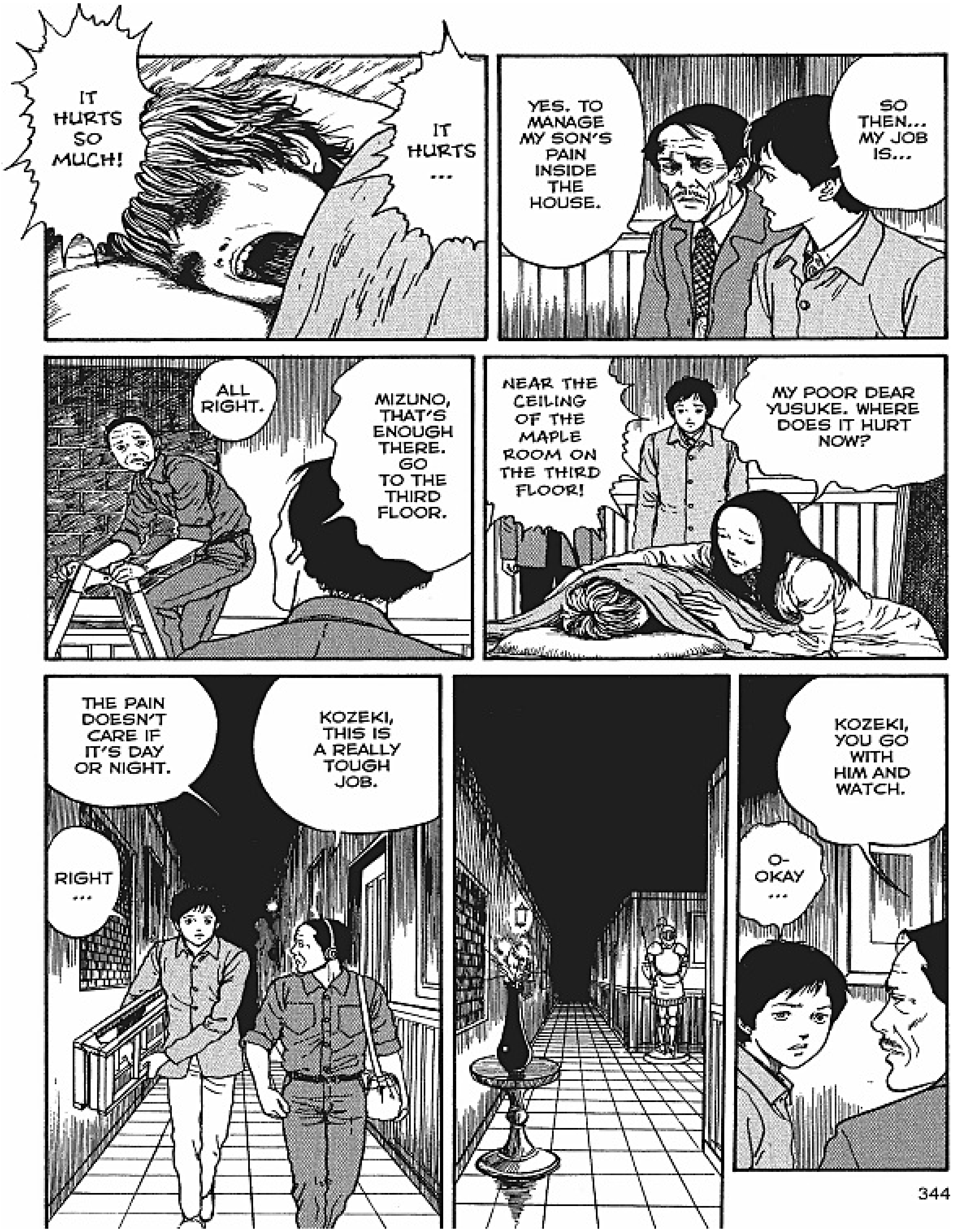

ARE YOU OKAY? YOU'RE BLEEDING.
HM? OH...
A CUT LIKE THIS IS NOTHING.
NOT COMPARED WITH MY SON'S PAIN.
THIS IS HIS ROOM.
MY WIFE AND SON.

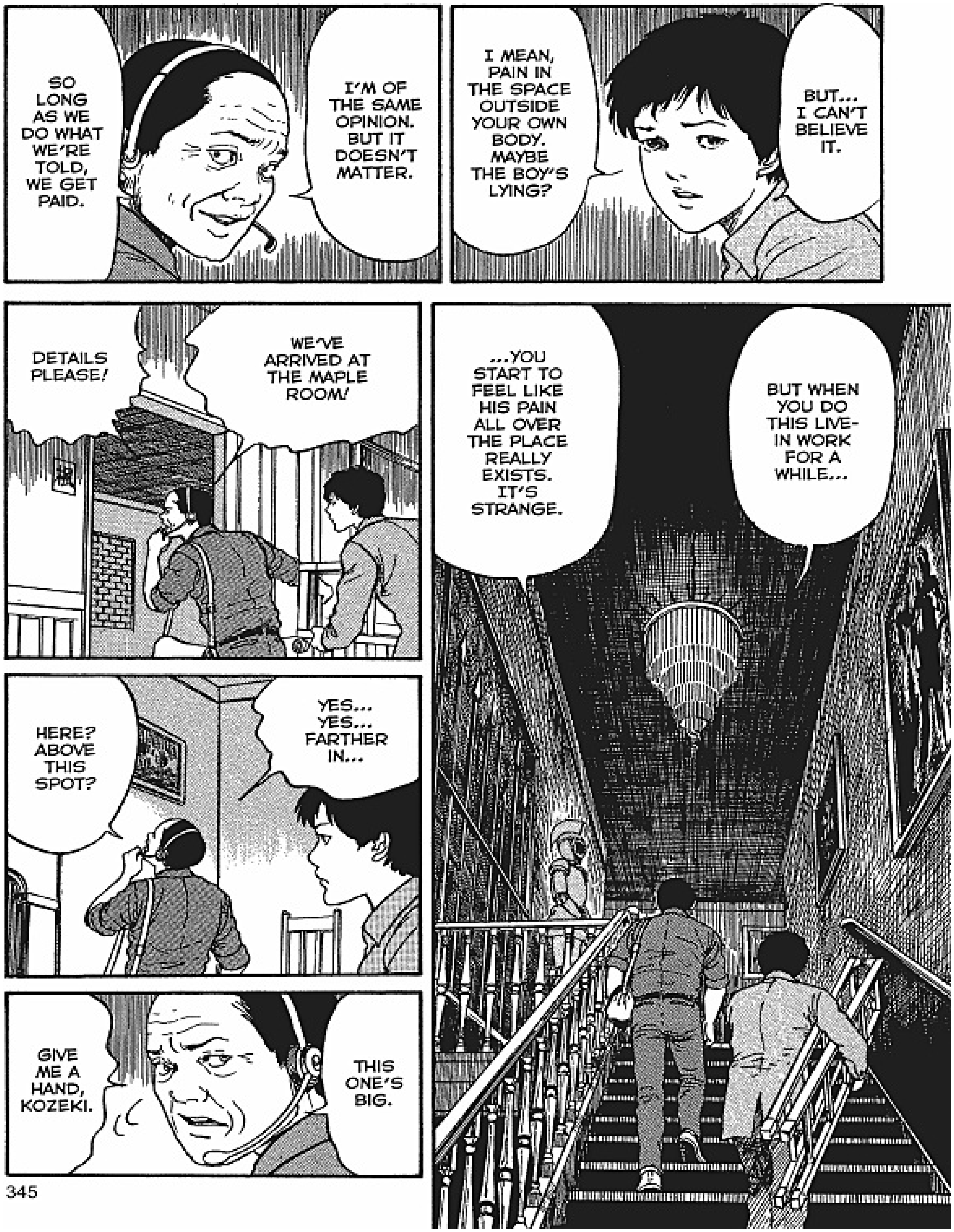

AND THAT'S MIZUNO.
HE'S THE TEAM LEADER.
WHAT'S HE DOING ...?
HIS JOB.
UNNNNH.
UHHH...
UNNNH.
IT HURTS. IT HURTS.
IT HURTS SO MUCH!
MY POOR LITTLE YUSUKE...
IT HURTS! MOMMY... RUB IT.

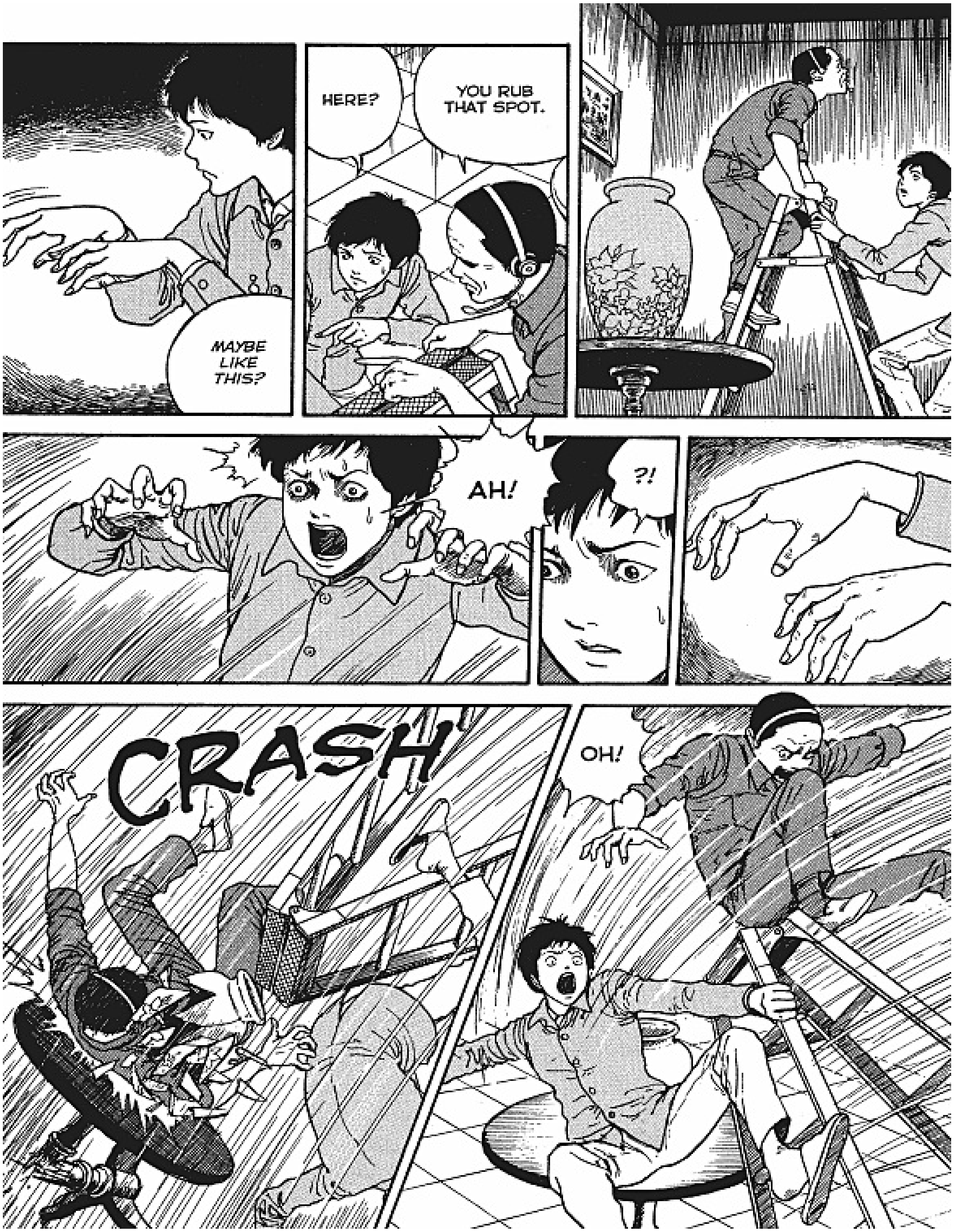

WHERE DOES IT HURT NOW?
HERE?
I'LL RUB IT FOR YOU.
YEAH ...
AROUND HERE?
MORE TO THE RIGHT...
IS THAT A LITTLE BETTER?
NOT YET.

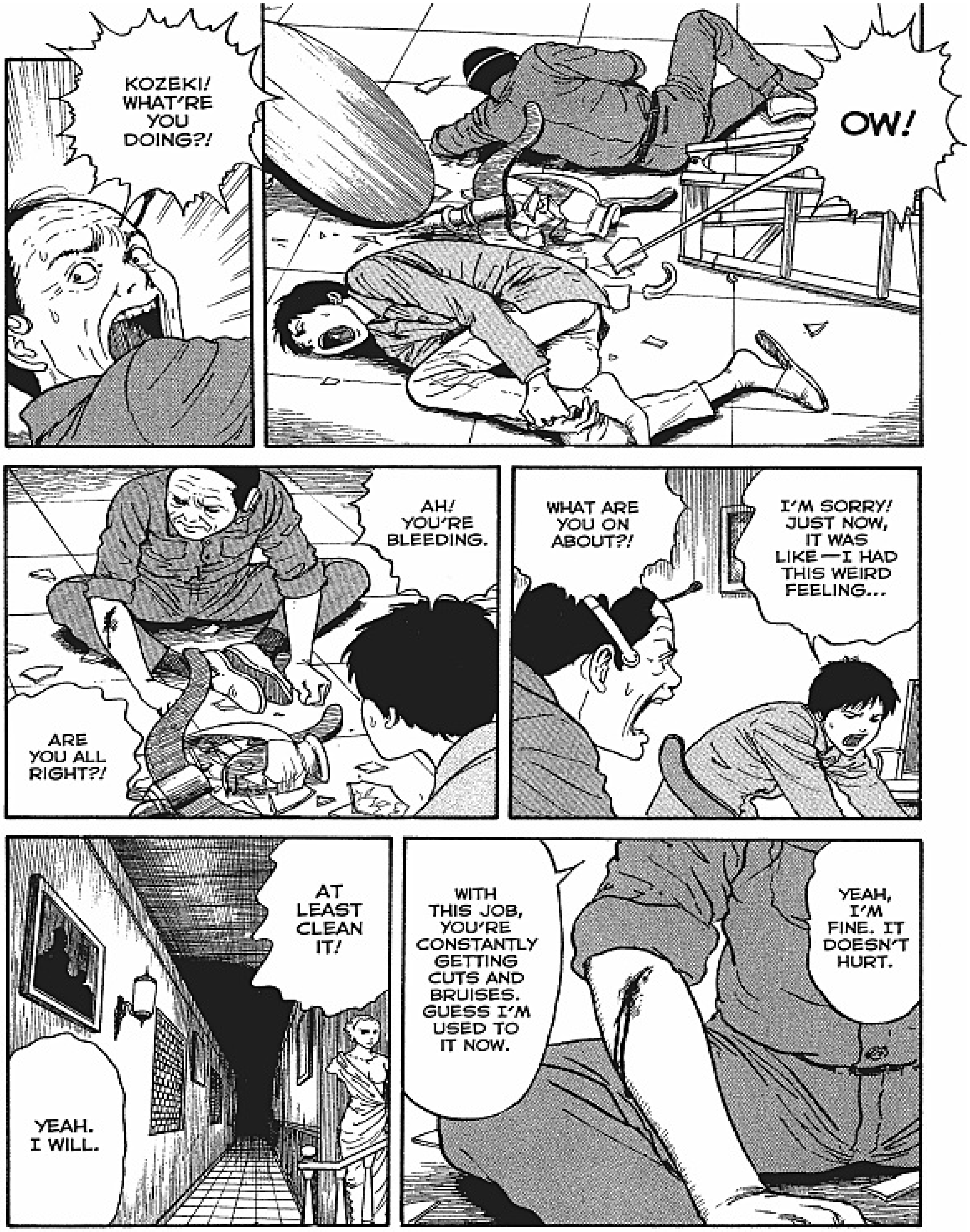

I SUPPOSE YOU'RE SURPRISED, KOZEKI?
MY SON HAS PAIN ALL OVER.
HE'S REALLY HURTING. IN IMPOSSIBLE PLACES...
THE WAY HE HURTS IN IMPOSSIBLE PLACES, HIS ILLNESS RESEMBLES PHANTOM PAIN.
PHANTOM PAIN IS THE SYNDROME WHERE A PERSON FEELS PAIN IN ARMS AND LEGS THAT THEY'VE LOST IN SURGERY OR AN ACCIDENT.
BUT MY SON HASN'T LOST ANY PART OF HIS BODY. AND THE PLACES WHERE HE HURTS ARE SPACES NOT CONNECTED TO HIS BODY.
THE DOCTORS KEEP SAYING IT'S PSYCHOLOGICAL.
AND INDEED, HE HAS BEEN MORE SENSITIVE TO PAIN THAN OTHER PEOPLE SINCE HE WAS SMALL.
IT MIGHT BE A DELUSION BORN OF AN EXCESSIVE FEAR OF PAIN. HOWEVER...

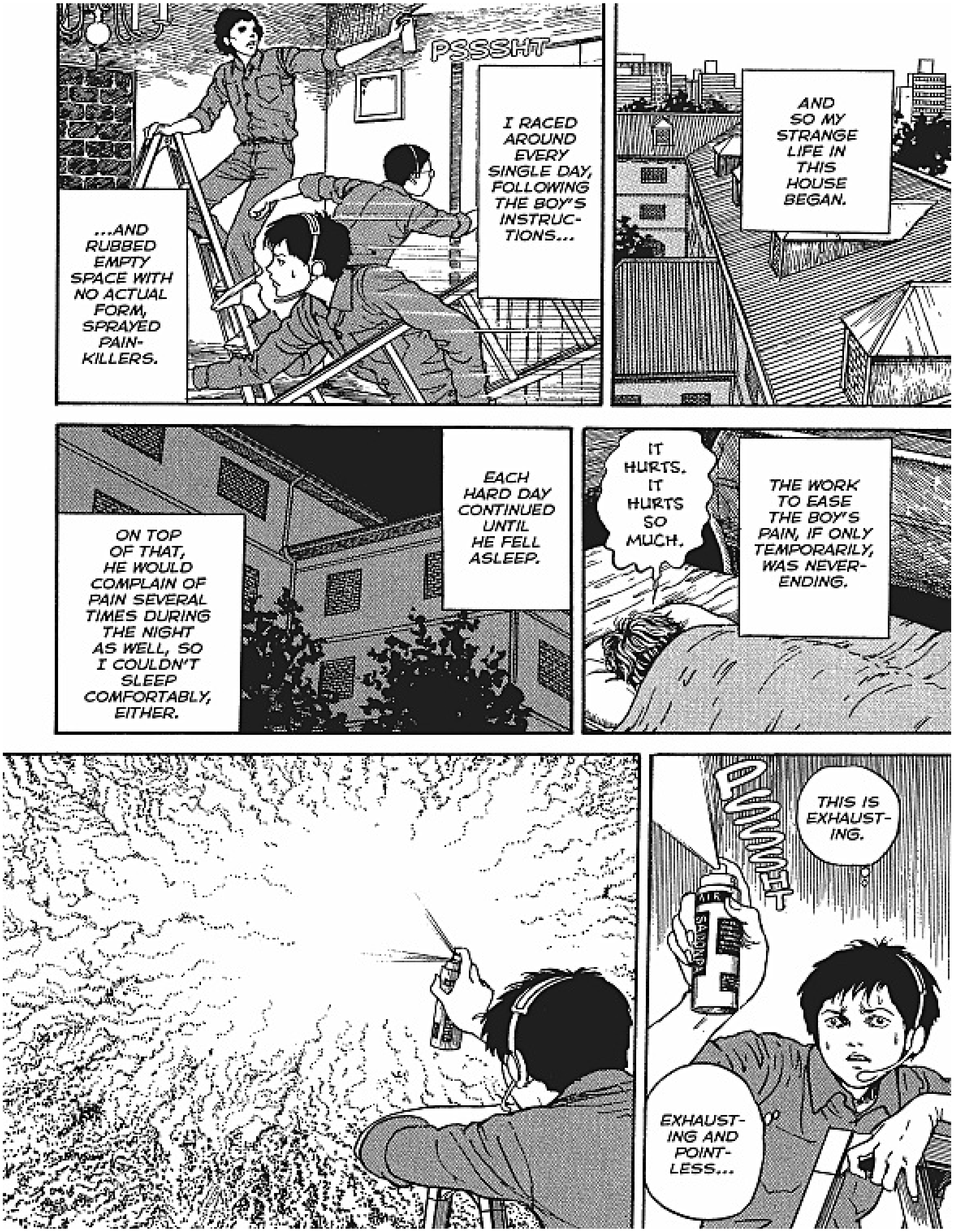

THIS IS HASHIMOTO. I'VE ARRIVED IN THE SAKURA ROOM ON THE NORTH SIDE OF THE FIRST FLOOR.
PLEASE GIVE ME A DETAILED LOCATION!
WHERE DOES IT HURT, YUSUKE?
NEAR THE WALL ON YOUR LEFT...
HURRY AND RUB IT.
...HERE?
A LITTLE HIGHER.
KOZEKI.
THE ISSUE NOW IS THAT THE RANGE OF HIS PAIN IS GRADUALLY GROWING.
AT FIRST, IT WAS THE SPACE IMMEDIATELY AROUND HIS BODY.
BUT NOW IT'S EXPANDED TO THE ENTIRE INTERIOR OF THE HOUSE.
IT WAS ALL WE COULD DO TO BLOCK THE WINDOWS SO HIS PAIN WOULDN'T PUSH OUTSIDE.

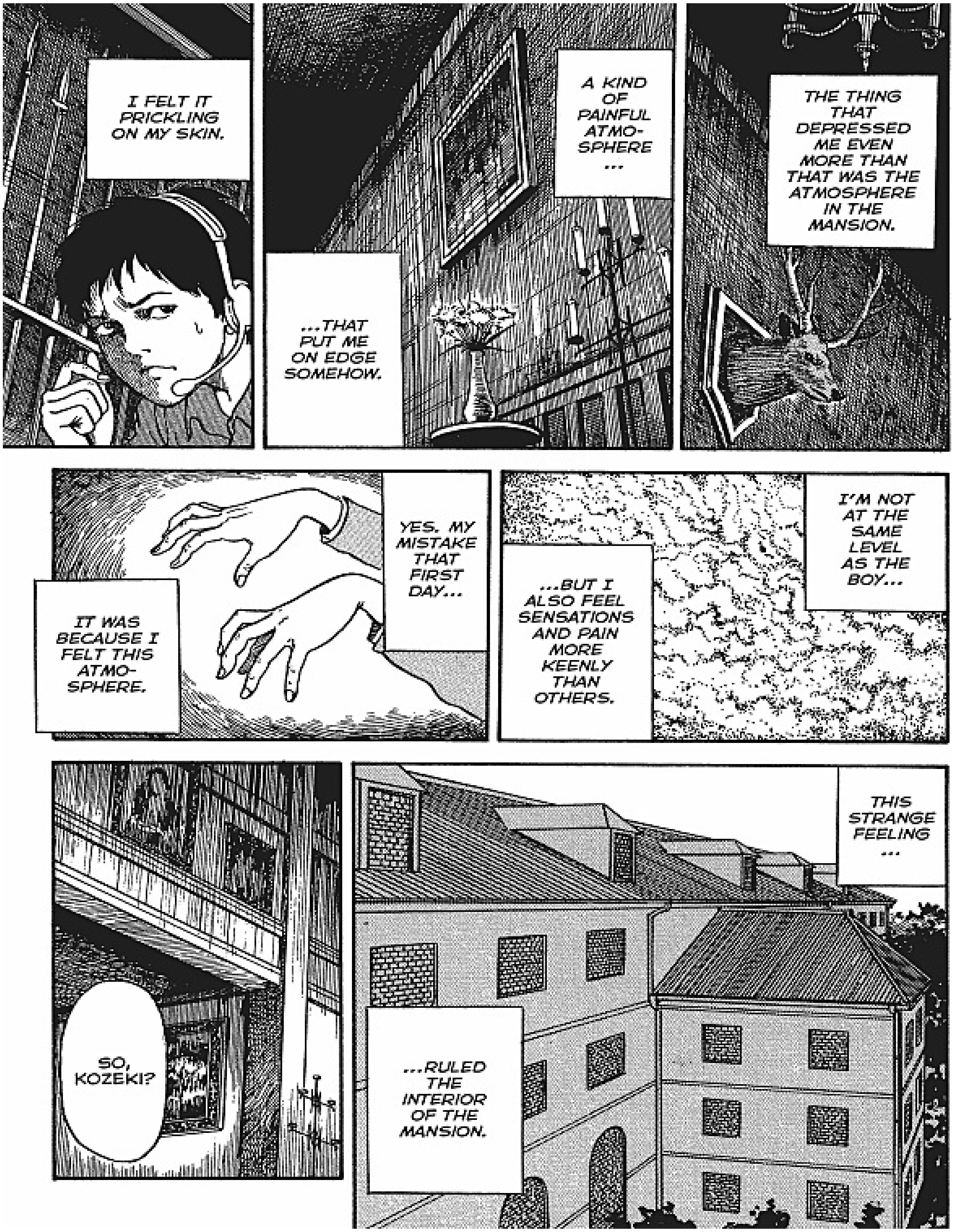

SO THEN... MY JOB IS...
YES. TO MANAGE MY SON'S PAIN INSIDE THE HOUSE.
IT HURTS ...
IT HURTS SO MUCH!
MY POOR DEAR YUSUKE. WHERE DOES IT HURT NOW?
NEAR THE CEILING OF THE MAPLE ROOM ON THE THIRD FLOOR!
MIZUNO, THAT'S ENOUGH THERE. GO TO THE THIRD FLOOR.
ALL RIGHT.
KOZEKI, YOU GO WITH HIM AND WATCH.
O-OKAY ...
KOZEKI, THIS IS A REALLY TOUGH JOB.
THE PAIN DOESN'T CARE IF IT'S DAY OR NIGHT.
RIGHT ...

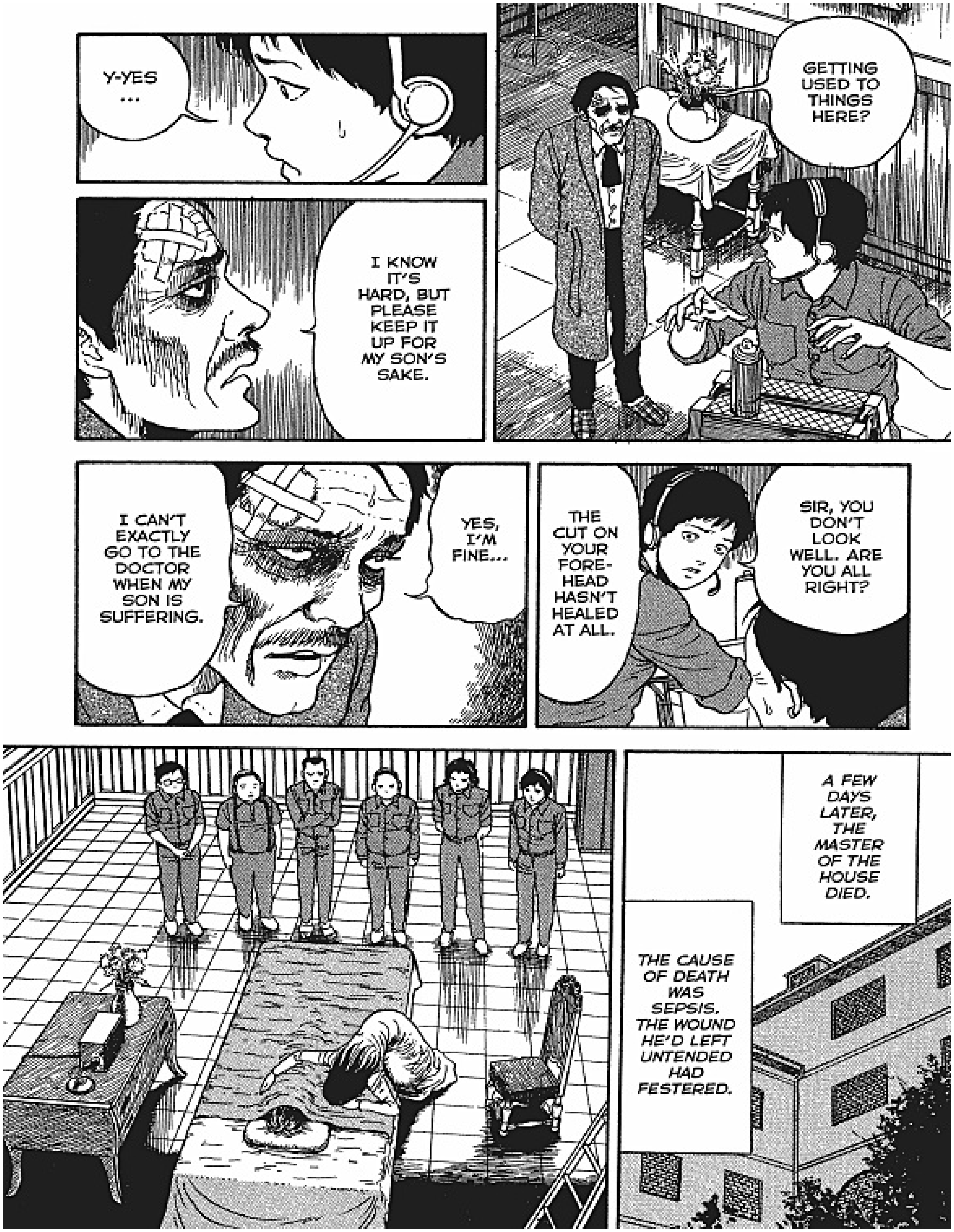

BUT... I CAN'T BELIEVE IT.
I MEAN, PAIN IN THE SPACE OUTSIDE YOUR OWN BODY. MAYBE THE BOY'S LYING?
I'M OF THE SAME OPINION. BUT IT DOESN'T MATTER.
SO LONG AS WE DO WHAT WE'RE TOLD, WE GET PAID.
BUT WHEN YOU DO THIS LIVE-IN WORK FOR A WHILE...
...YOU START TO FEEL LIKE HIS PAIN ALL OVER THE PLACE REALLY EXISTS. IT'S STRANGE.
WE'VE ARRIVED AT THE MAPLE ROOM!
DETAILS PLEASE!
YES... YES... FARTHER IN...
HERE? ABOVE THIS SPOT?
THIS ONE'S BIG.
GIVE ME A HAND, KOZEKI.

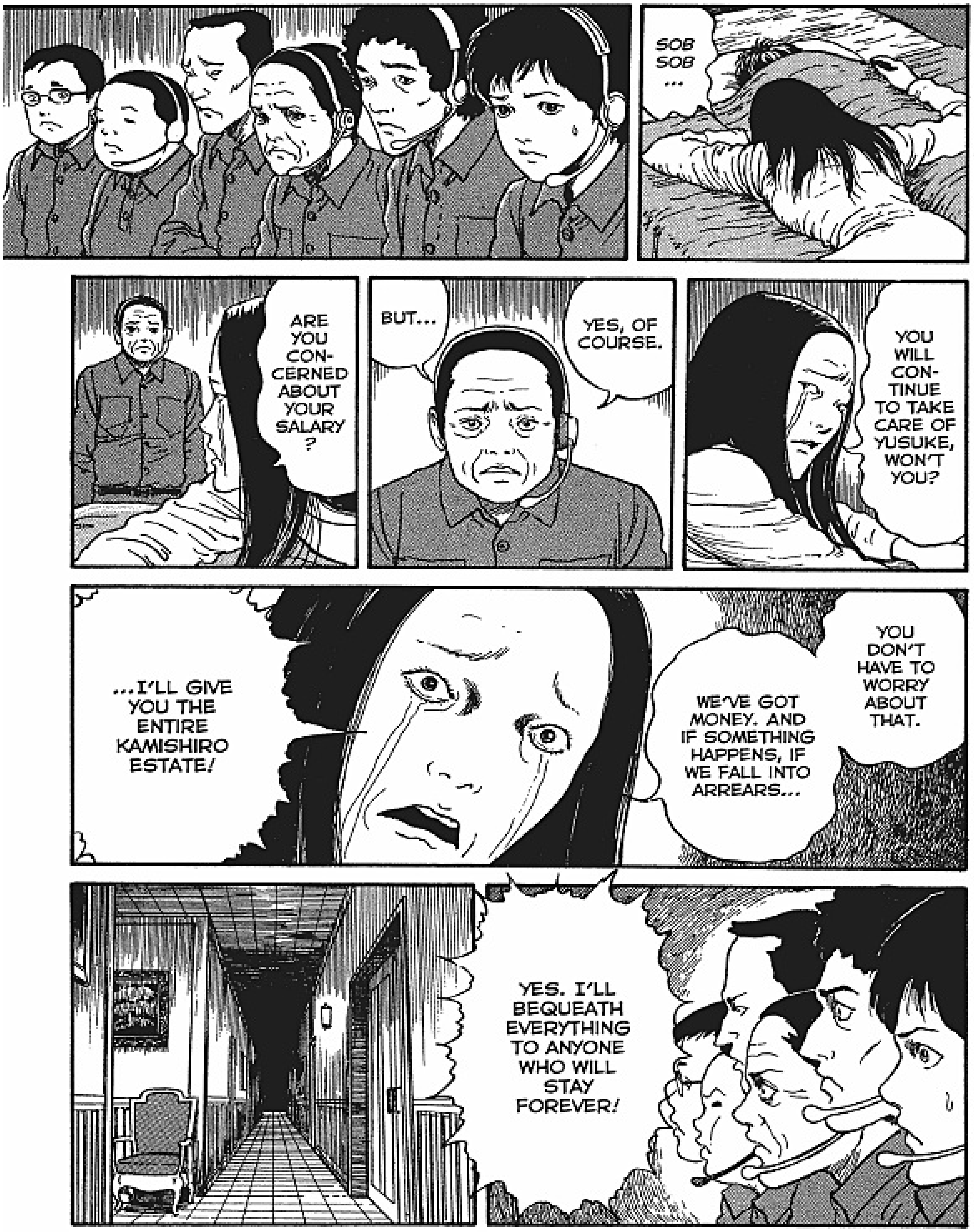

YOU RUB THAT SPOT.
HERE?
MAYBE LIKE THIS?
?!
AH!
OH!
CRASH

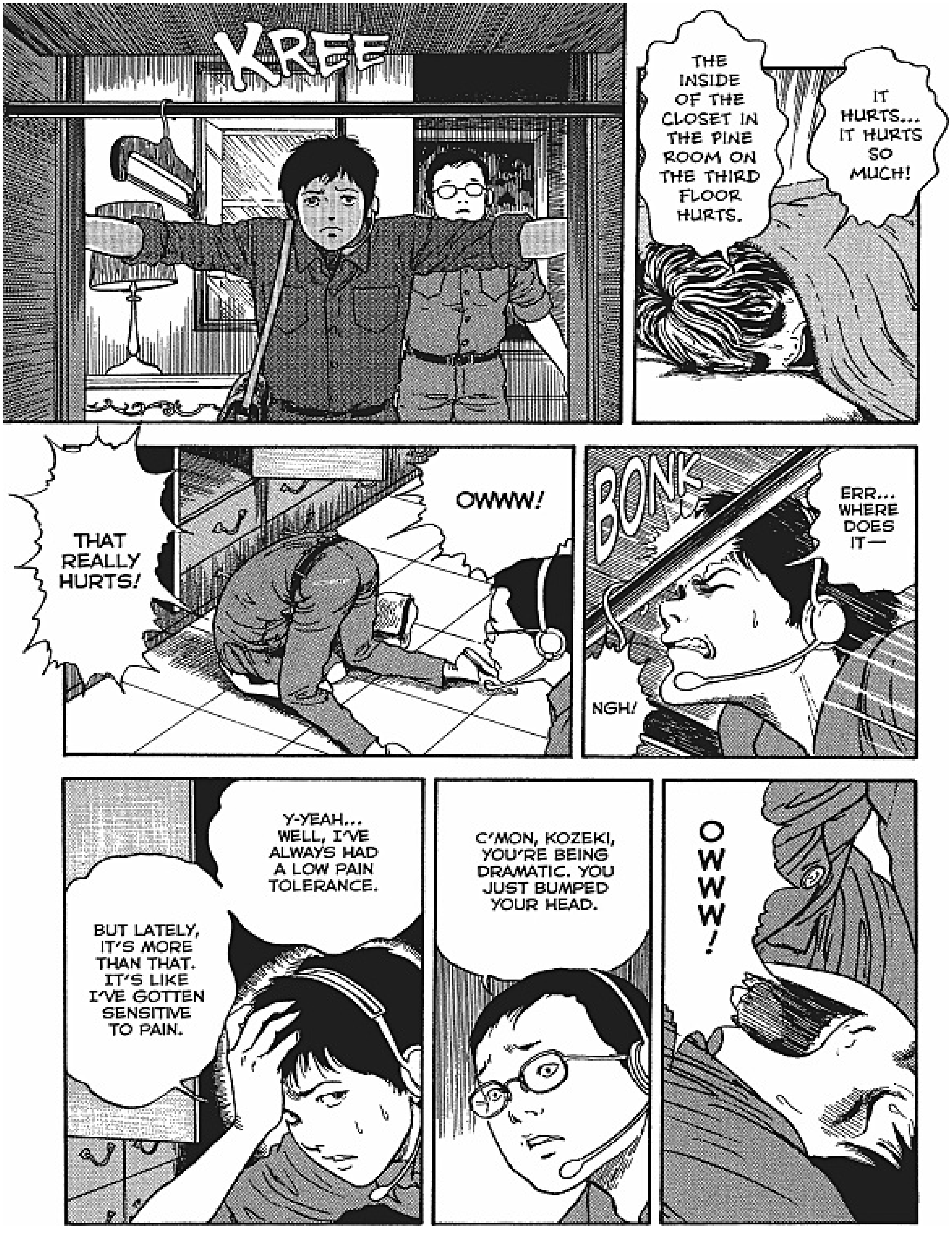

OW!
KOZEKI! WHAT'RE YOU DOING?!
I'M SORRY! JUST NOW, IT WAS LIKE—I HAD THIS WEIRD FEELING...
WHAT ARE YOU ON ABOUT?!
AH! YOU'RE BLEEDING.
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?!
YEAH, I'M FINE. IT DOESN'T HURT.
WITH THIS JOB, YOU'RE CONSTANTLY GETTING CUTS AND BRUISES. GUESS I'M USED TO IT NOW.
AT LEAST CLEAN IT!
YEAH. I WILL.

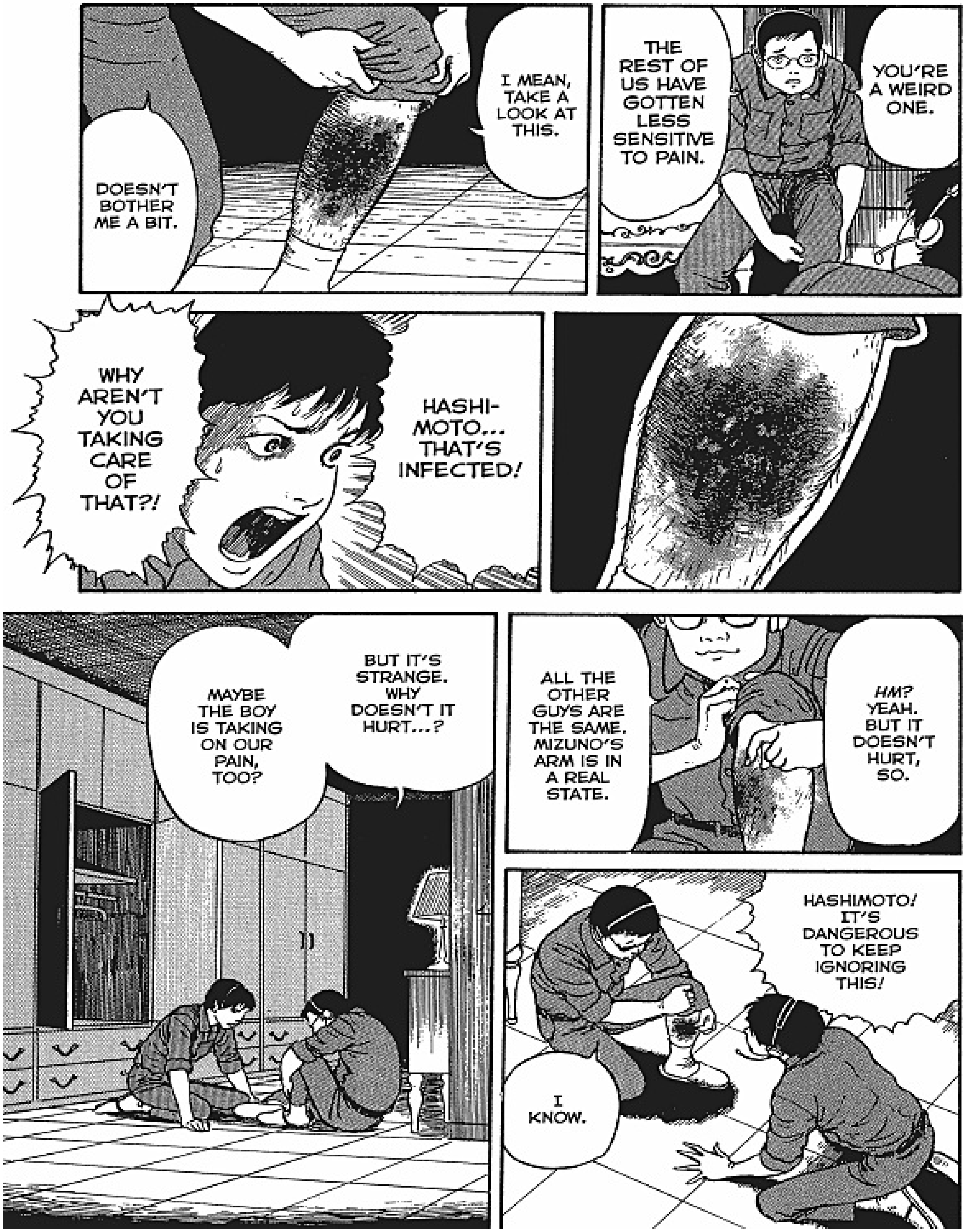

AND SO MY STRANGE LIFE IN THIS HOUSE BEGAN.
PSSSHT
I RACED AROUND EVERY SINGLE DAY, FOLLOWING THE BOY'S INSTRUCTIONS...
...AND RUBBED EMPTY SPACE WITH NO ACTUAL FORM, SPRAYED PAIN-KILLERS.
THE WORK TO EASE THE BOY'S PAIN, IF ONLY TEMPORARILY, WAS NEVER-ENDING.
IT HURTS. IT HURTS SO MUCH.
EACH HARD DAY CONTINUED UNTIL HE FELL ASLEEP.
ON TOP OF THAT, HE WOULD COMPLAIN OF PAIN SEVERAL TIMES DURING THE NIGHT AS WELL, SO I COULDN'T SLEEP COMFORTABLY, EITHER.
PWMMT
THIS IS EXHAUSTING.
EXHAUSTING AND POINTLESS...

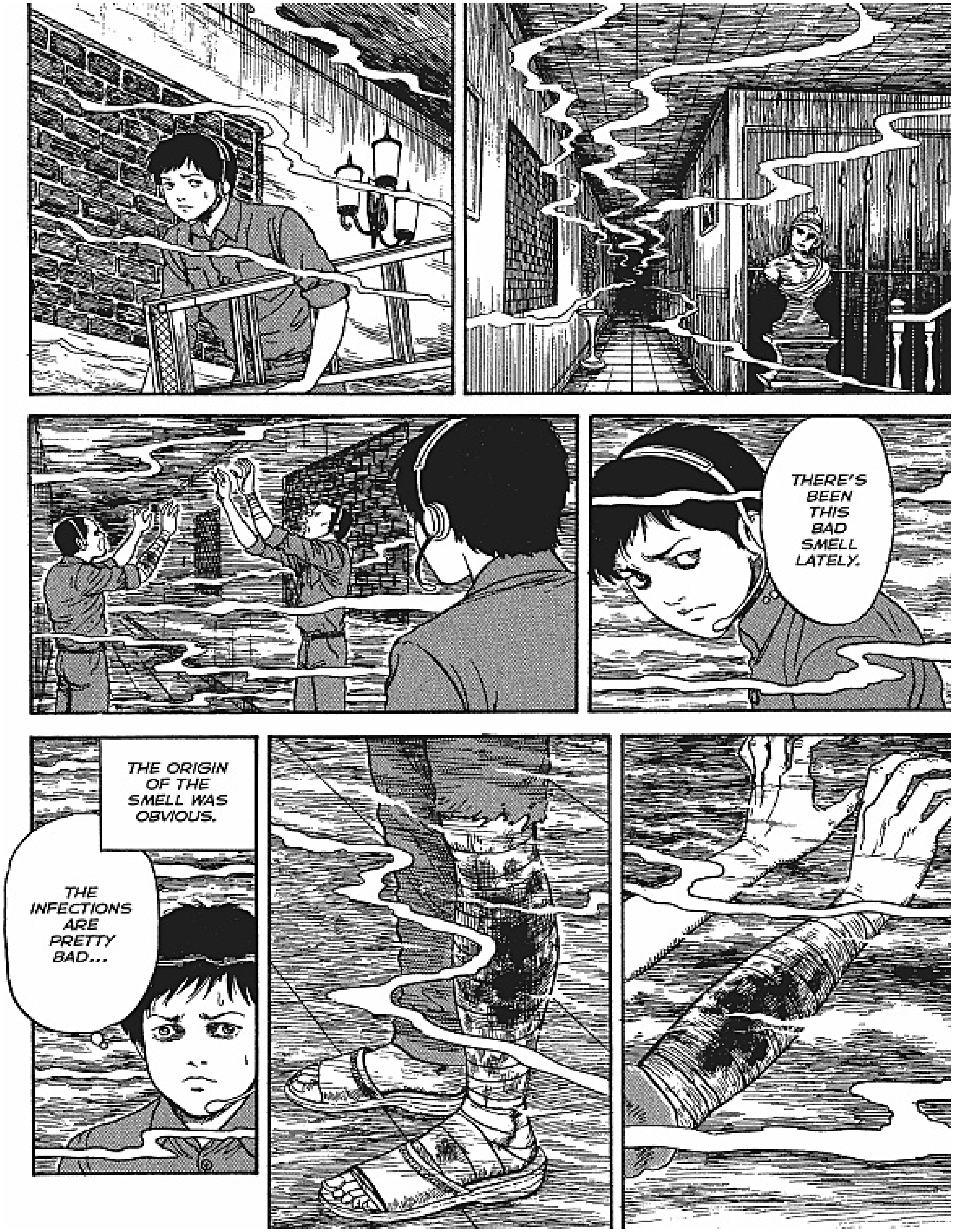

I FELT IT PRICKLING ON MY SKIN.
A KIND OF PAINFUL ATMOSPHERE ...
...THAT PUT ME ON EDGE SOMEHOW.
THE THING THAT DEPRESSED ME EVEN MORE THAN THAT WAS THE ATMOSPHERE IN THE MANSION.
YES. MY MISTAKE THAT FIRST DAY...
IT WAS BECAUSE I FELT THIS ATMOSPHERE.
I'M NOT AT THE SAME LEVEL AS THE BOY...
...BUT I ALSO FEEL SENSATIONS AND PAIN MORE KEENLY THAN OTHERS.
SO, KOZEKI?
THIS STRANGE FEELING ...
...RULED THE INTERIOR OF THE MANSION.

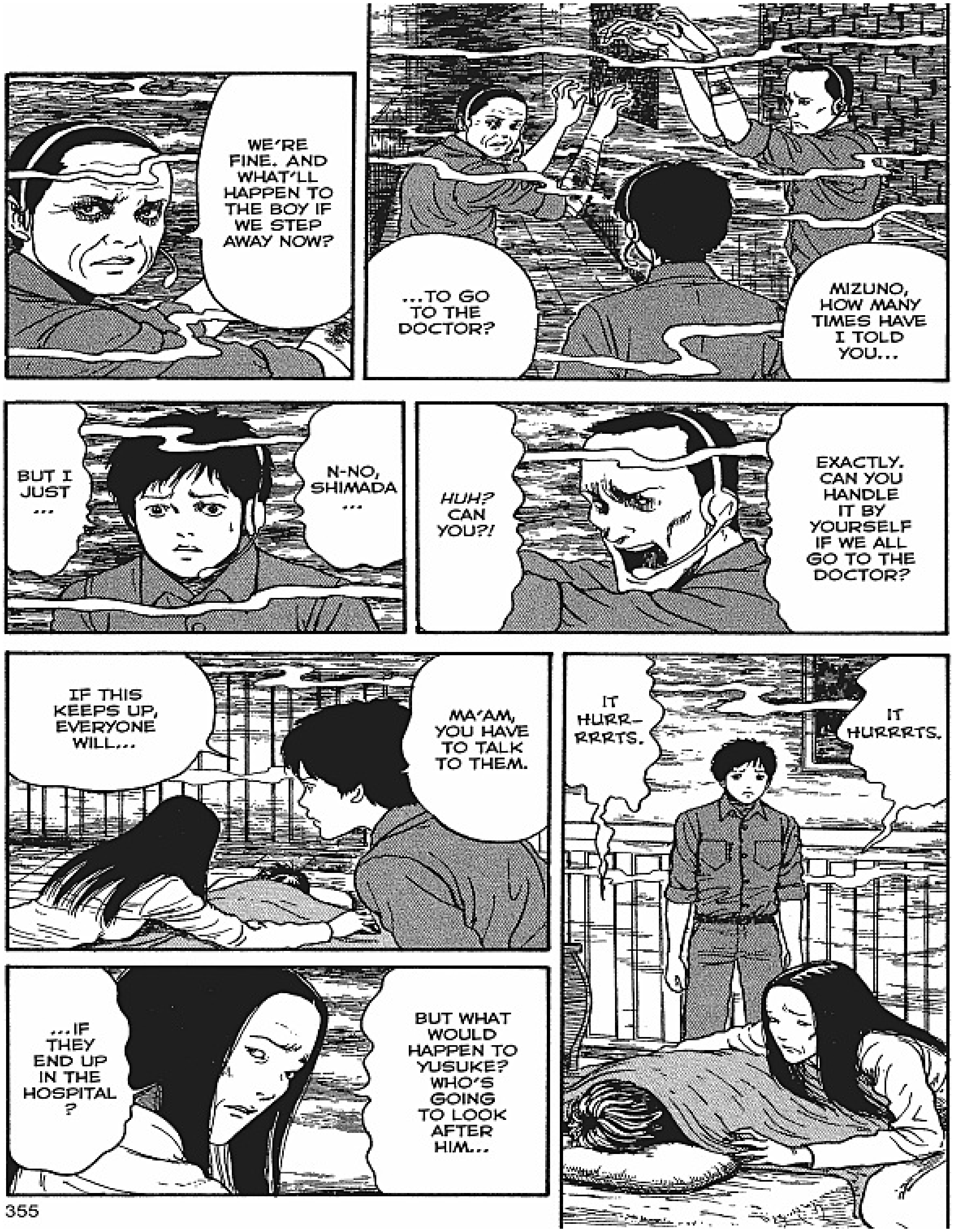

GETTING USED TO THINGS HERE?
Y-YES ...
I KNOW IT'S HARD, BUT PLEASE KEEP IT UP FOR MY SON'S SAKE.
SIR, YOU DON'T LOOK WELL. ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
THE CUT ON YOUR FOREHEAD HASN'T HEALED AT ALL.
YES, I'M FINE...
I CAN'T EXACTLY GO TO THE DOCTOR WHEN MY SON IS SUFFERING.
A FEW DAYS LATER, THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE DIED.
THE CAUSE OF DEATH WAS SEPSIS. THE WOUND HE'D LEFT UNTENDED HAD FESTERED.

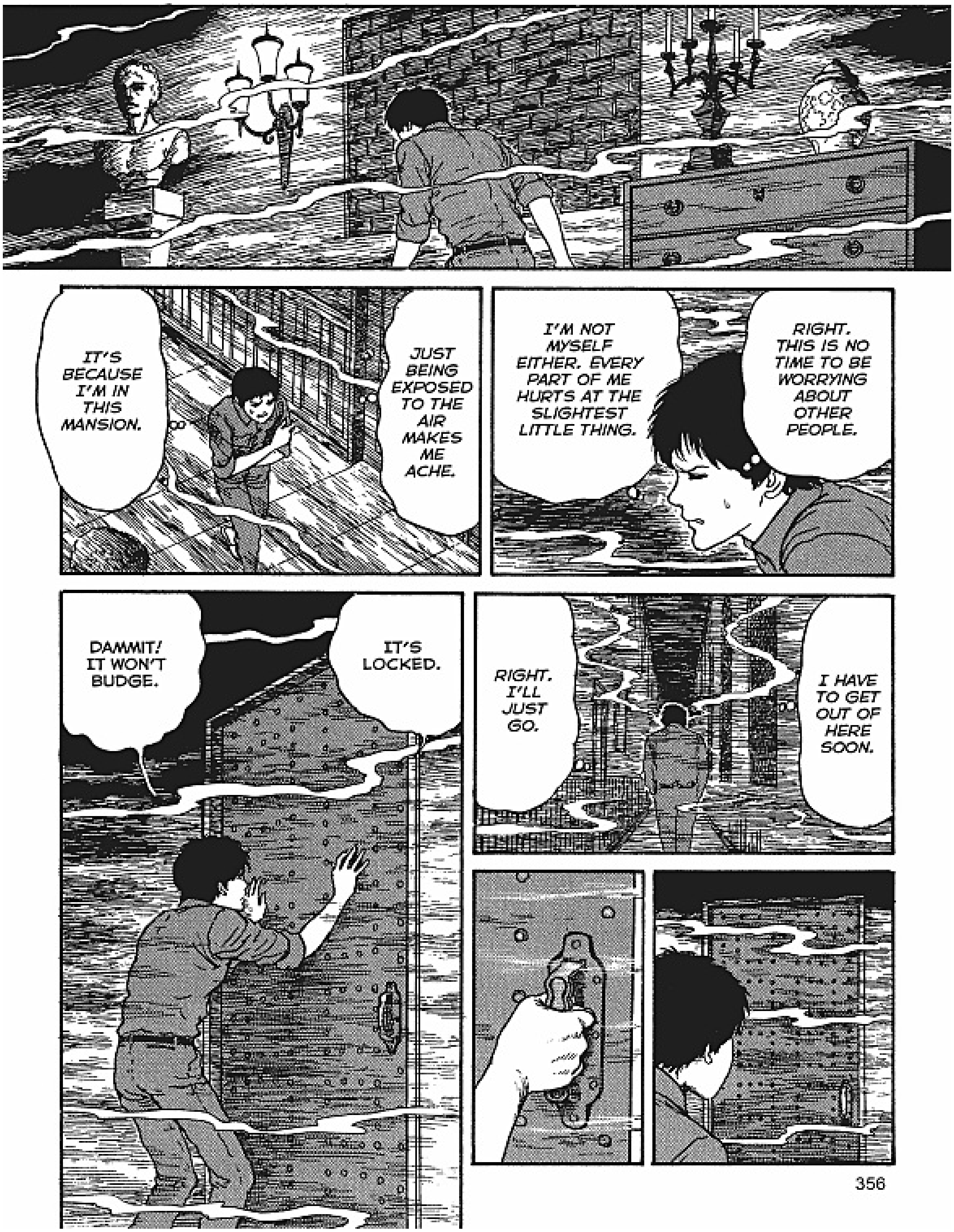

SOB SOB ...
YOU WILL CONTINUE TO TAKE CARE OF YUSUKE, WON'T YOU?
YES, OF COURSE.
BUT...
ARE YOU CONCERNED ABOUT YOUR SALARY?
YOU DON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT THAT.
WE'VE GOT MONEY. AND IF SOMETHING HAPPENS, IF WE FALL INTO ARREARS...
...I'LL GIVE YOU THE ENTIRE KAMISHIRO ESTATE!
YES. I'LL BEQUEATH EVERYTHING TO ANYONE WHO WILL STAY FOREVER!

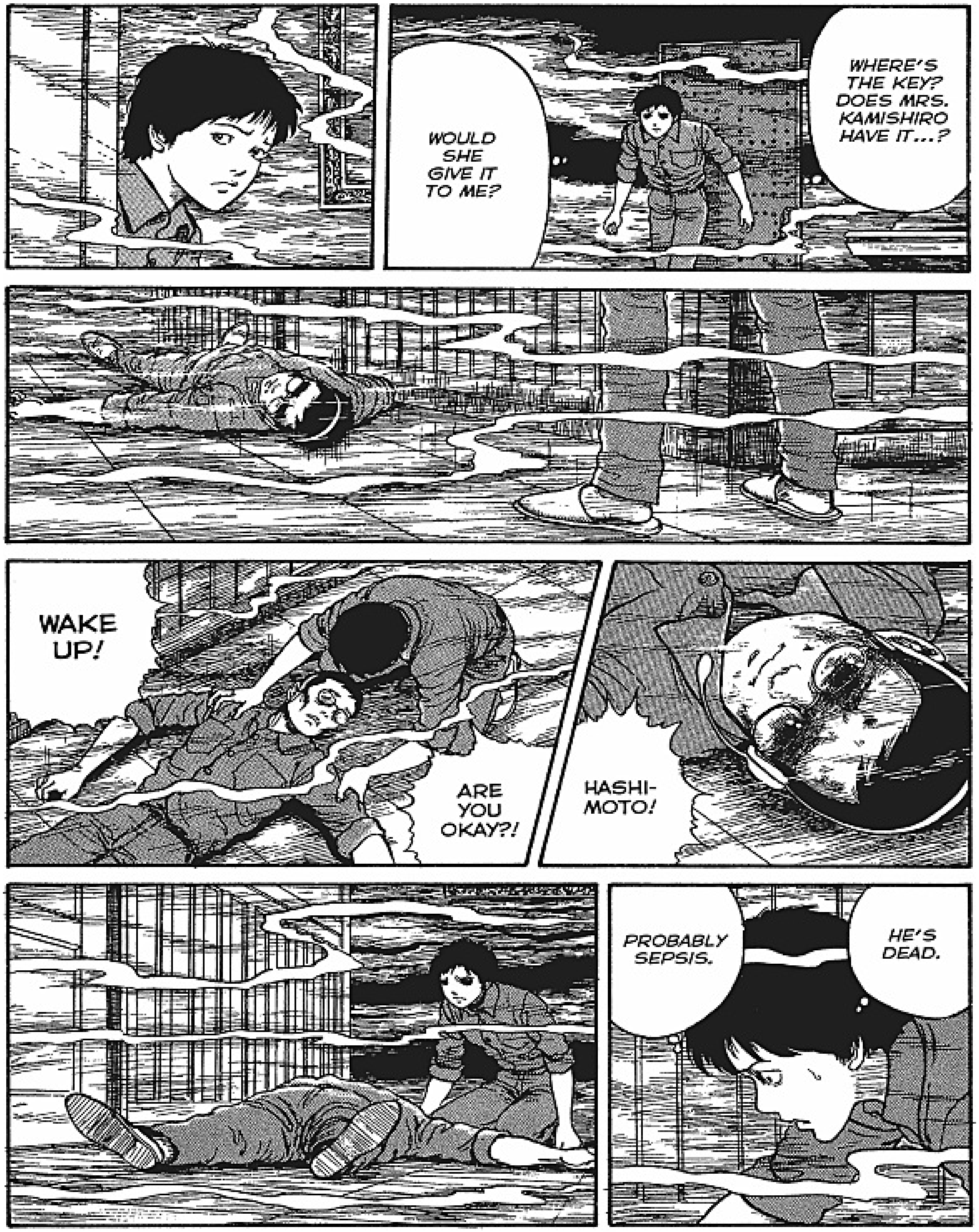

THE INSIDE OF THE CLOSET IN THE PINE ROOM ON THE THIRD FLOOR HURTS.
IT HURTS... IT HURTS SO MUCH!
KREE
BONK
ERR... WHERE DOES IT—
NGH!
OWWW!
THAT REALLY HURTS!
OWWW!
C'MON, KOZEKI, YOU'RE BEING DRAMATIC. YOU JUST BUMPED YOUR HEAD.
Y-YEAH... WELL, I'VE ALWAYS HAD A LOW PAIN TOLERANCE.
BUT LATELY, IT'S MORE THAN THAT. IT'S LIKE I'VE GOTTEN SENSITIVE TO PAIN.

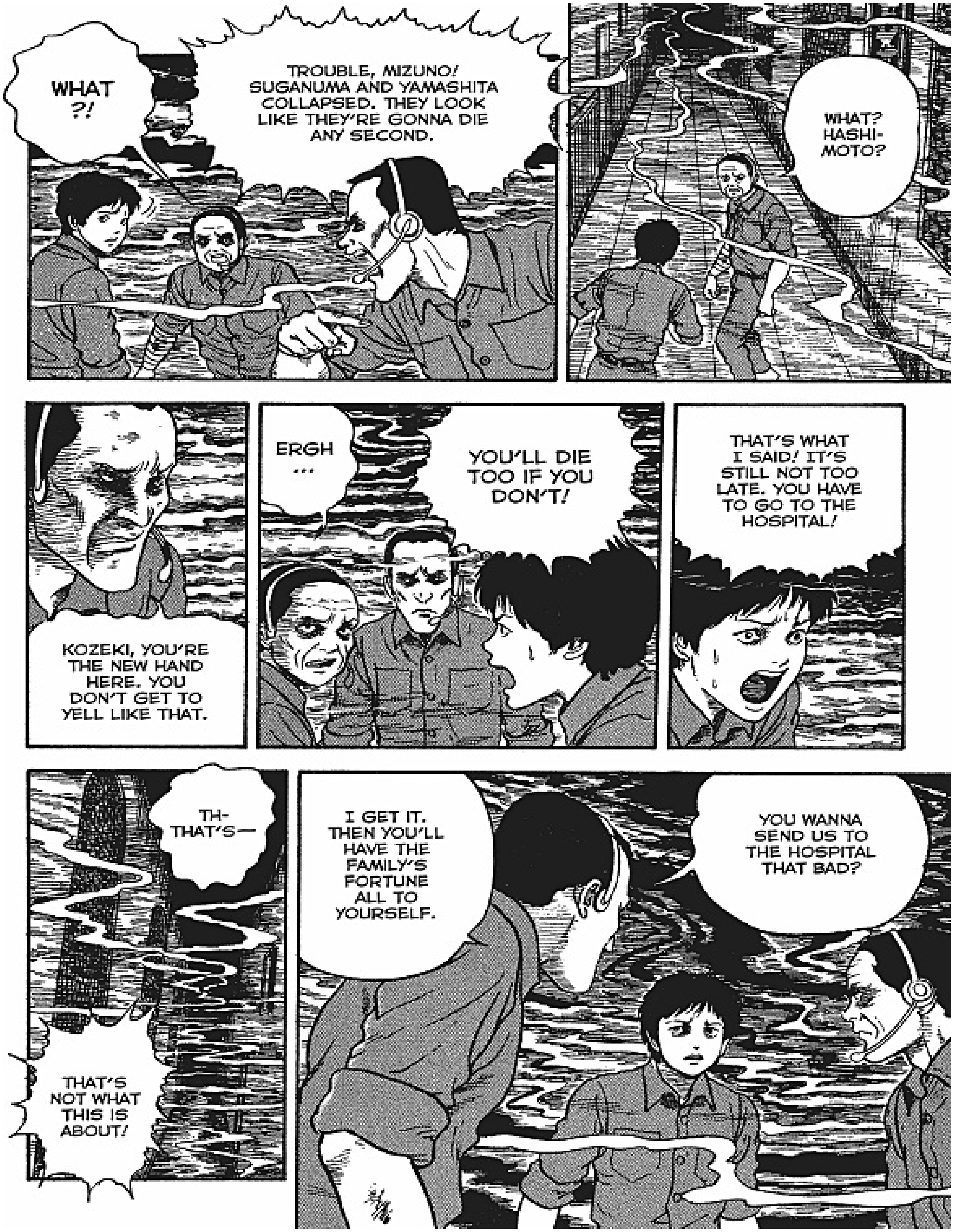

YOU'RE A WEIRD ONE.
THE REST OF US HAVE GOTTEN LESS SENSITIVE TO PAIN.
I MEAN, TAKE A LOOK AT THIS.
DOESN'T BOTHER ME A BIT.
HASHIMOTO... THAT'S INFECTED!
WHY AREN'T YOU TAKING CARE OF THAT?!
HM? YEAH. BUT IT DOESN'T HURT, SO.
ALL THE OTHER GUYS ARE THE SAME. MIZUNO'S ARM IS IN A REAL STATE.
HASHIMOTO! IT'S DANGEROUS TO KEEP IGNORING THIS!
I KNOW.
BUT IT'S STRANGE. WHY DOESN'T IT HURT...?
MAYBE THE BOY IS TAKING ON OUR PAIN, TOO?

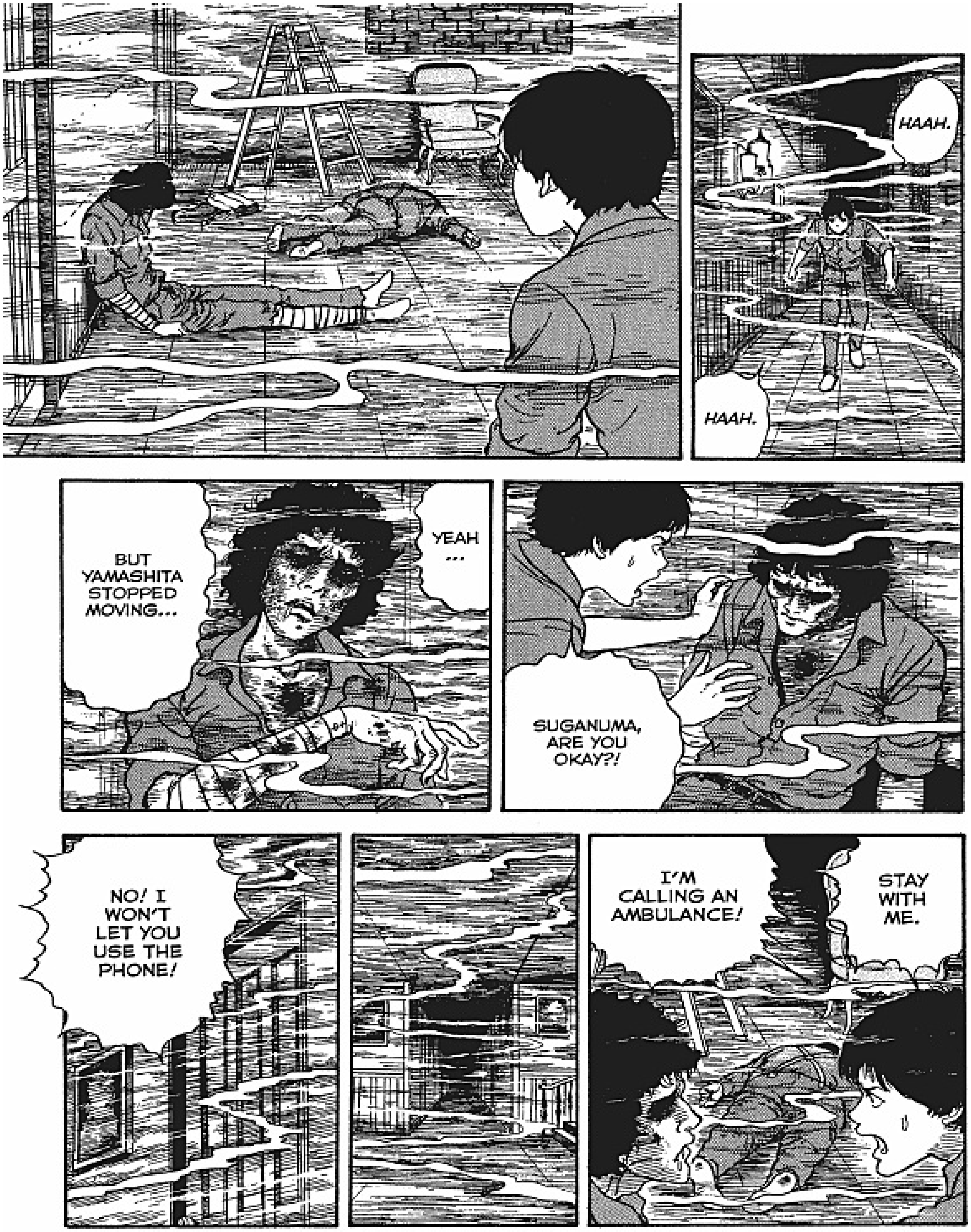

THERE'S BEEN THIS BAD SMELL LATELY.
THE ORIGIN OF THE SMELL WAS OBVIOUS.
THE INFECTIONS ARE PRETTY BAD...

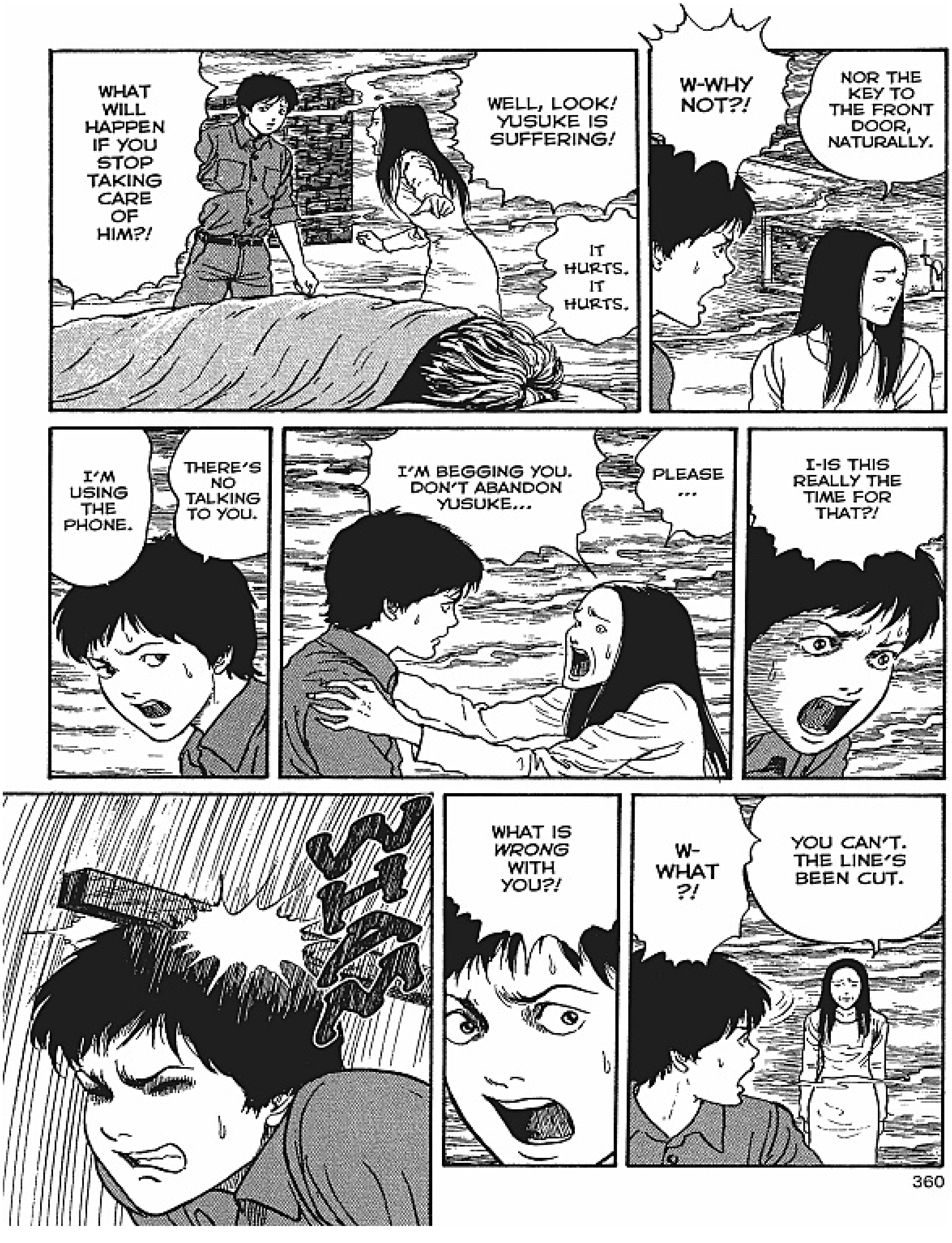

MIZUNO, HOW MANY TIMES HAVE I TOLD YOU...
...TO GO TO THE DOCTOR?
WE'RE FINE. AND WHAT'LL HAPPEN TO THE BOY IF WE STEP AWAY NOW?
EXACTLY. CAN YOU HANDLE IT BY YOURSELF IF WE ALL GO TO THE DOCTOR?
HUH? CAN YOU?!
N-NO, SHIMADA...
BUT I JUST...
IT HURRRTS.
IT HURR-RRRTS.
MA'AM, YOU HAVE TO TALK TO THEM.
IF THIS KEEPS UP, EVERYONE WILL...
BUT WHAT WOULD HAPPEN TO YUSUKE? WHO'S GOING TO LOOK AFTER HIM...
...IF THEY END UP IN THE HOSPITAL?

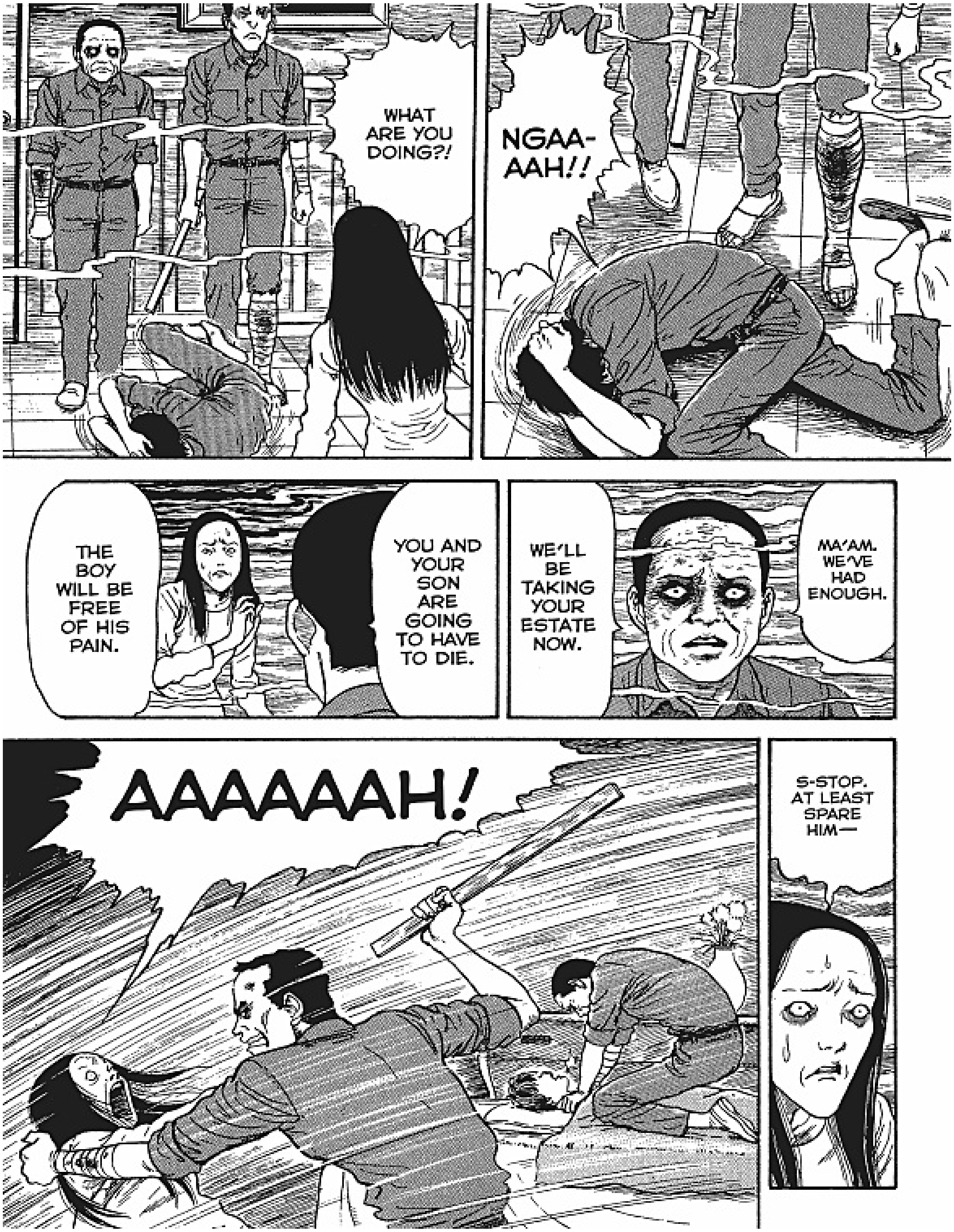

RIGHT. THIS IS NO TIME TO BE WORRYING ABOUT OTHER PEOPLE.
I'M NOT MYSELF EITHER. EVERY PART OF ME HURTS AT THE SLIGHTEST LITTLE THING.
JUST BEING EXPOSED TO THE AIR MAKES ME ACHE.
IT'S BECAUSE I'M IN THIS MANSION.
I HAVE TO GET OUT OF HERE SOON.
RIGHT. I'LL JUST GO.
IT'S LOCKED.
DAMMIT! IT WON'T BUDGE.

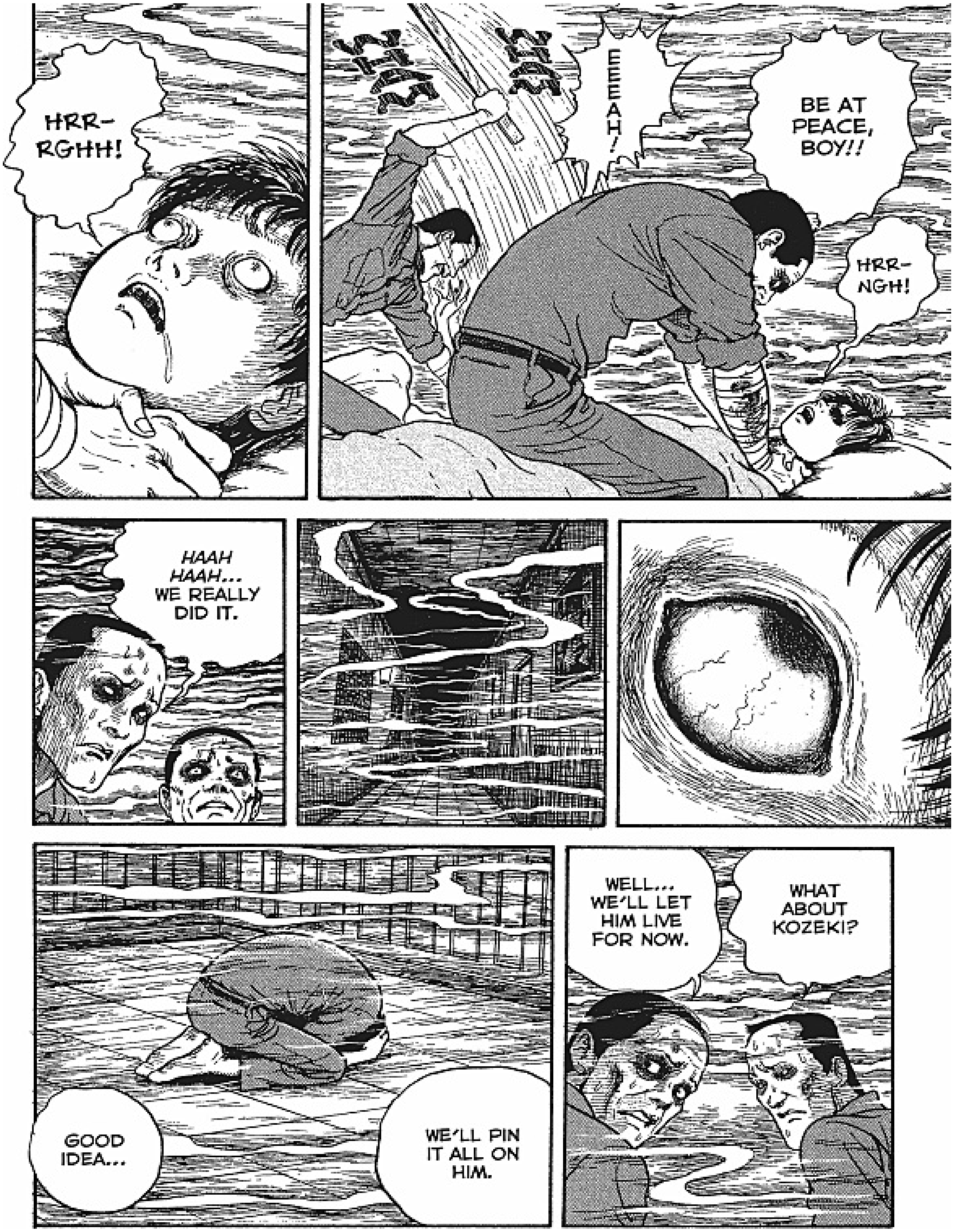

WHERE'S THE KEY? DOES MRS. KAMISHIRO HAVE IT...?
WOULD SHE GIVE IT TO ME?
HASHI-MOTO!
ARE YOU OKAY?!
WAKE UP!
HE'S DEAD.
PROBABLY SEPSIS.

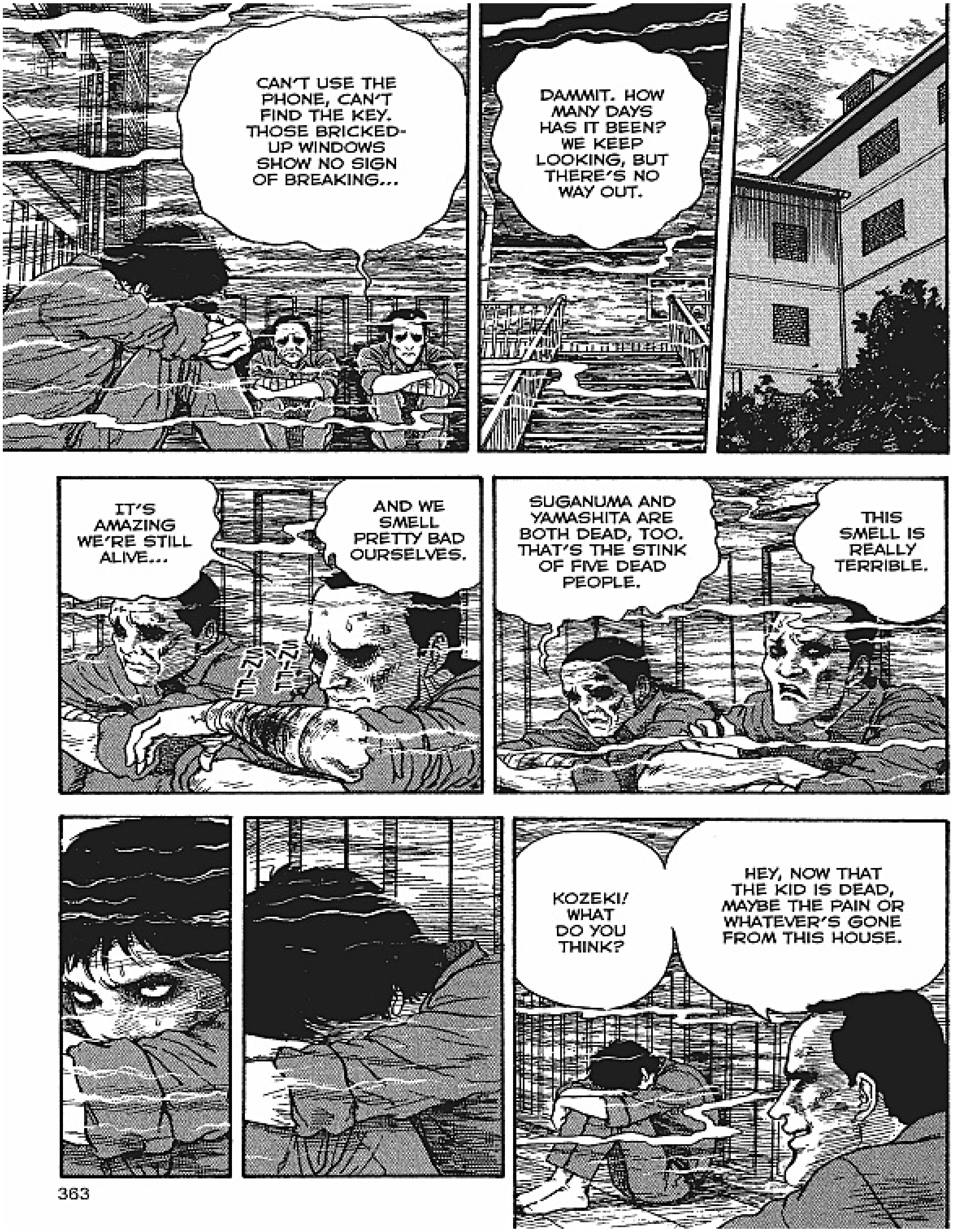

WHAT? HASHI-MOTO?
TROUBLE, MIZUNO! SUGANUMA AND YAMASHITA COLLAPSED. THEY LOOK LIKE THEY'RE GONNA DIE ANY SECOND.
WHAT ?!
THAT'S WHAT I SAID! IT'S STILL NOT TOO LATE. YOU HAVE TO GO TO THE HOSPITAL!
YOU'LL DIE TOO IF YOU DON'T!
ERGH ...
KOZEKI, YOU'RE THE NEW HAND HERE. YOU DON'T GET TO YELL LIKE THAT.
YOU WANNA SEND US TO THE HOSPITAL THAT BAD?
I GET IT. THEN YOU'LL HAVE THE FAMILY'S FORTUNE ALL TO YOURSELF.
TH- THAT'S—
THAT'S NOT WHAT THIS IS ABOUT!

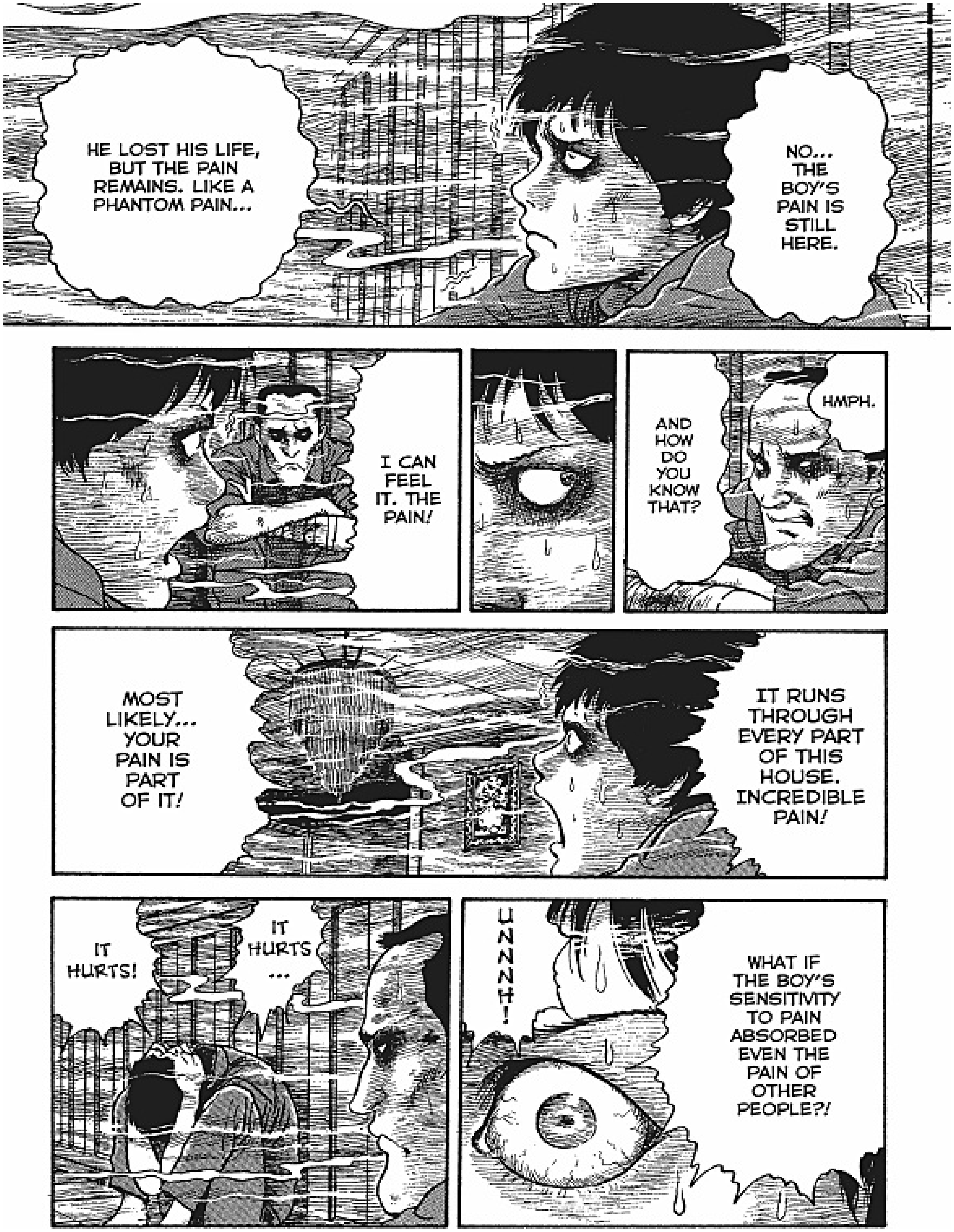

HAAH.
HAAH.
SUGANUMA, ARE YOU OKAY?!
YEAH ...
BUT YAMASHITA STOPPED MOVING...
STAY WITH ME.
I'M CALLING AN AMBULANCE!
NO! I WON'T LET YOU USE THE PHONE!

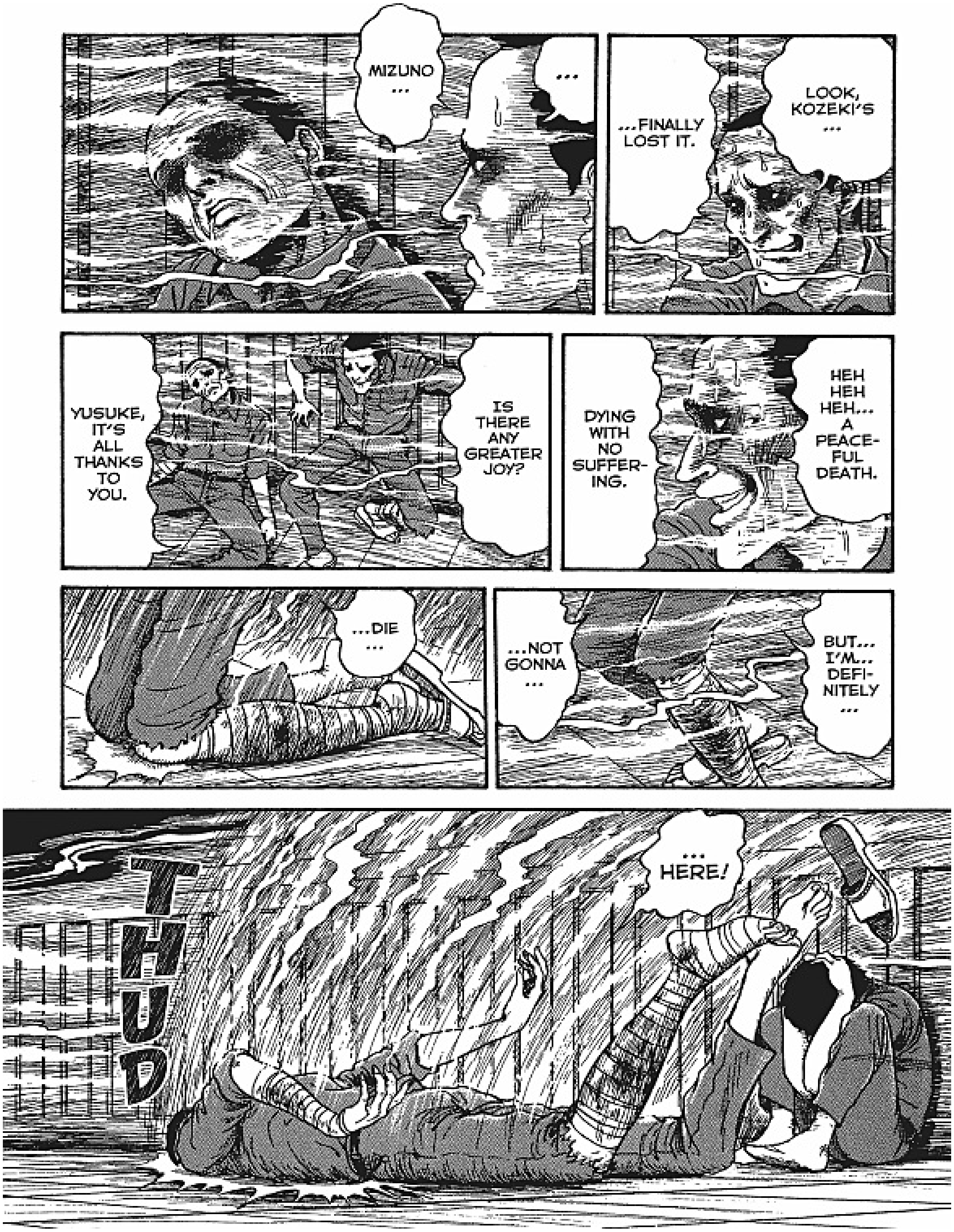

NOR THE KEY TO THE FRONT DOOR, NATURALLY.
W-WHY NOT?!
WELL, LOOK! YUSUKE IS SUFFERING!
WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF YOU STOP TAKING CARE OF HIM?!
IT HURTS. IT HURTS.
I-IS THIS REALLY THE TIME FOR THAT?!
PLEASE ...
I'M BEGGING YOU. DON'T ABANDON YUSUKE...
THERE'S NO TALKING TO YOU.
I'M USING THE PHONE.
YOU CAN'T. THE LINE'S BEEN CUT.
W-WHAT?!
WHAT IS *WRONG* WITH YOU?!

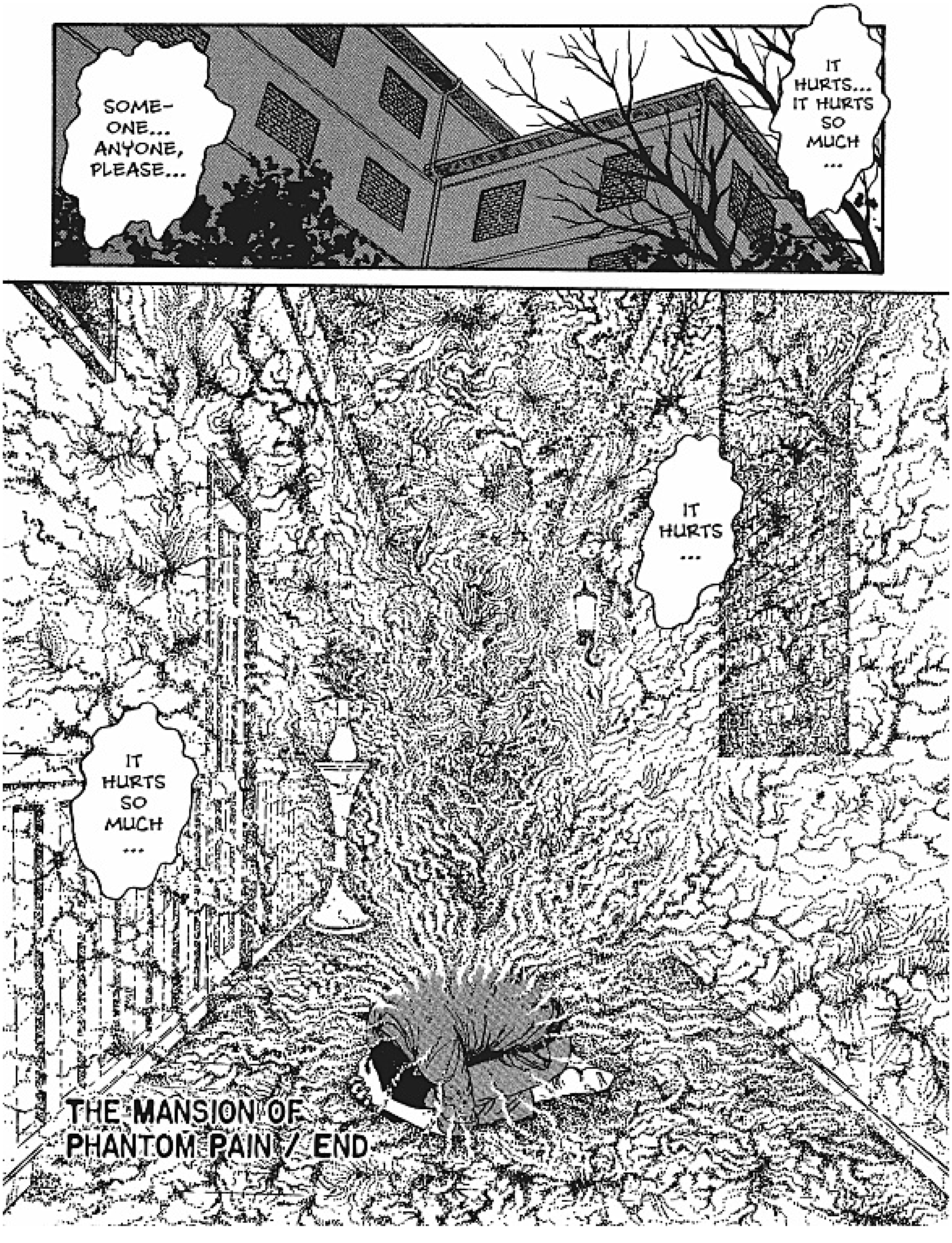

NGAA-AAH!!
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!
MA'AM. WE'VE HAD ENOUGH.
WE'LL BE TAKING YOUR ESTATE NOW.
YOU AND YOUR SON ARE GOING TO HAVE TO DIE.
THE BOY WILL BE FREE OF HIS PAIN.
S-STOP. AT LEAST SPARE HIM—
AAAAAAH!


BE AT PEACE, BOY!!
EEEAH!
HRR-NGH!
HRR-RGHH!
HAAH HAAH... WE REALLY DID IT.
WHAT ABOUT KOZEKI?
WELL... WE'LL LET HIM LIVE FOR NOW.
WE'LL PIN IT ALL ON HIM.
GOOD IDEA...


CAN'T USE THE PHONE, CAN'T FIND THE KEY. THOSE BRICKED-UP WINDOWS SHOW NO SIGN OF BREAKING...
DAMMIT. HOW MANY DAYS HAS IT BEEN? WE KEEP LOOKING, BUT THERE'S NO WAY OUT.
IT'S AMAZING WE'RE STILL ALIVE...
AND WE SMELL PRETTY BAD OURSELVES.
SNIFF
SNIFF
SUGANUMA AND YAMASHITA ARE BOTH DEAD, TOO. THAT'S THE STINK OF FIVE DEAD PEOPLE.
THIS SMELL IS REALLY TERRIBLE.
KOZEKI! WHAT DO YOU THINK?
HEY, NOW THAT THE KID IS DEAD, MAYBE THE PAIN OR WHATEVER'S GONE FROM THIS HOUSE.

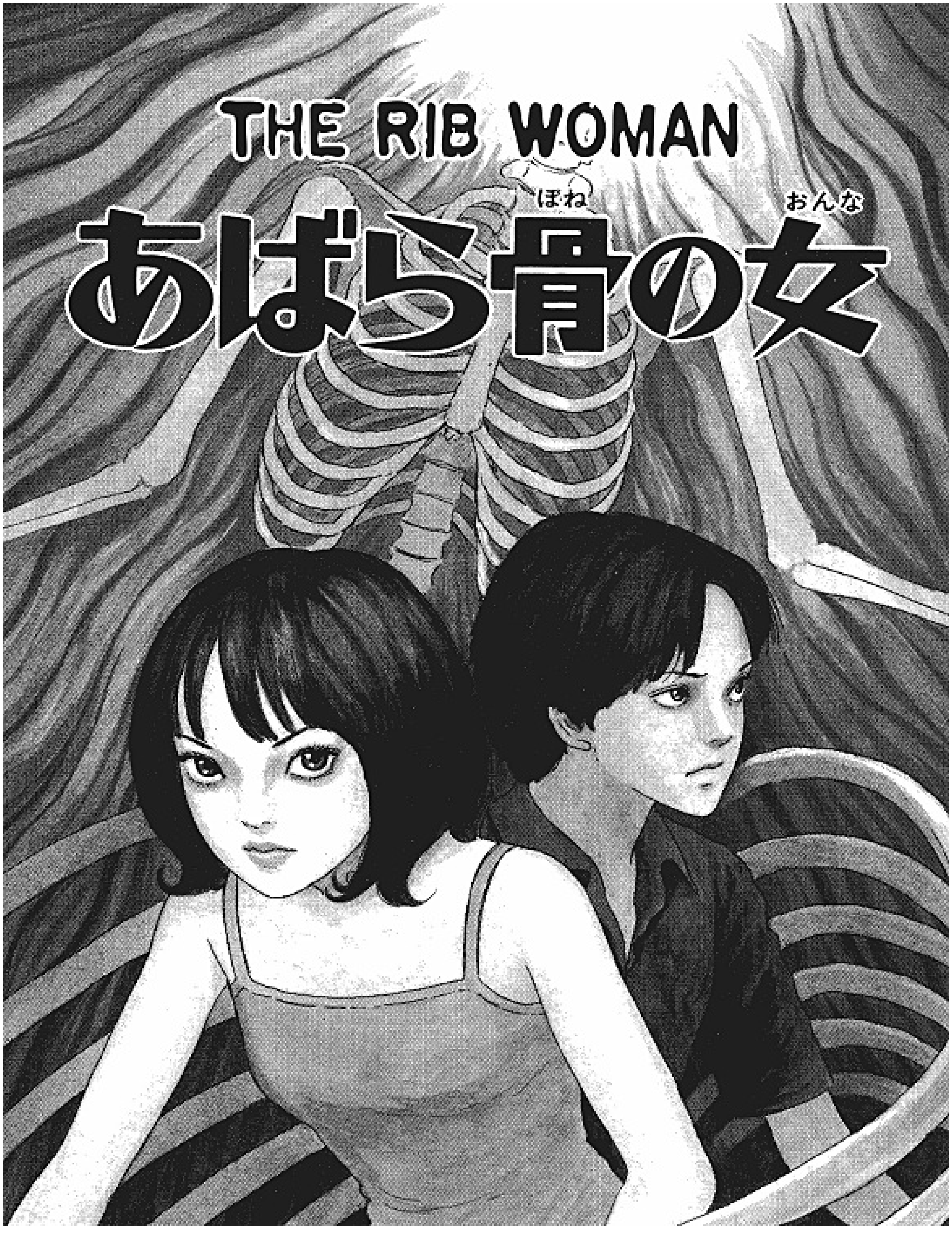

NO... THE BOY'S PAIN IS STILL HERE.
HE LOST HIS LIFE, BUT THE PAIN REMAINS. LIKE A PHANTOM PAIN...
HMPH.
AND HOW DO YOU KNOW THAT?
I CAN FEEL IT. THE PAIN!
IT RUNS THROUGH EVERY PART OF THIS HOUSE. INCREDIBLE PAIN!
MOST LIKELY... YOUR PAIN IS PART OF IT!
UNNNH!
WHAT IF THE BOY'S SENSITIVITY TO PAIN ABSORBED EVEN THE PAIN OF OTHER PEOPLE?!
IT HURTS...
IT HURTS!

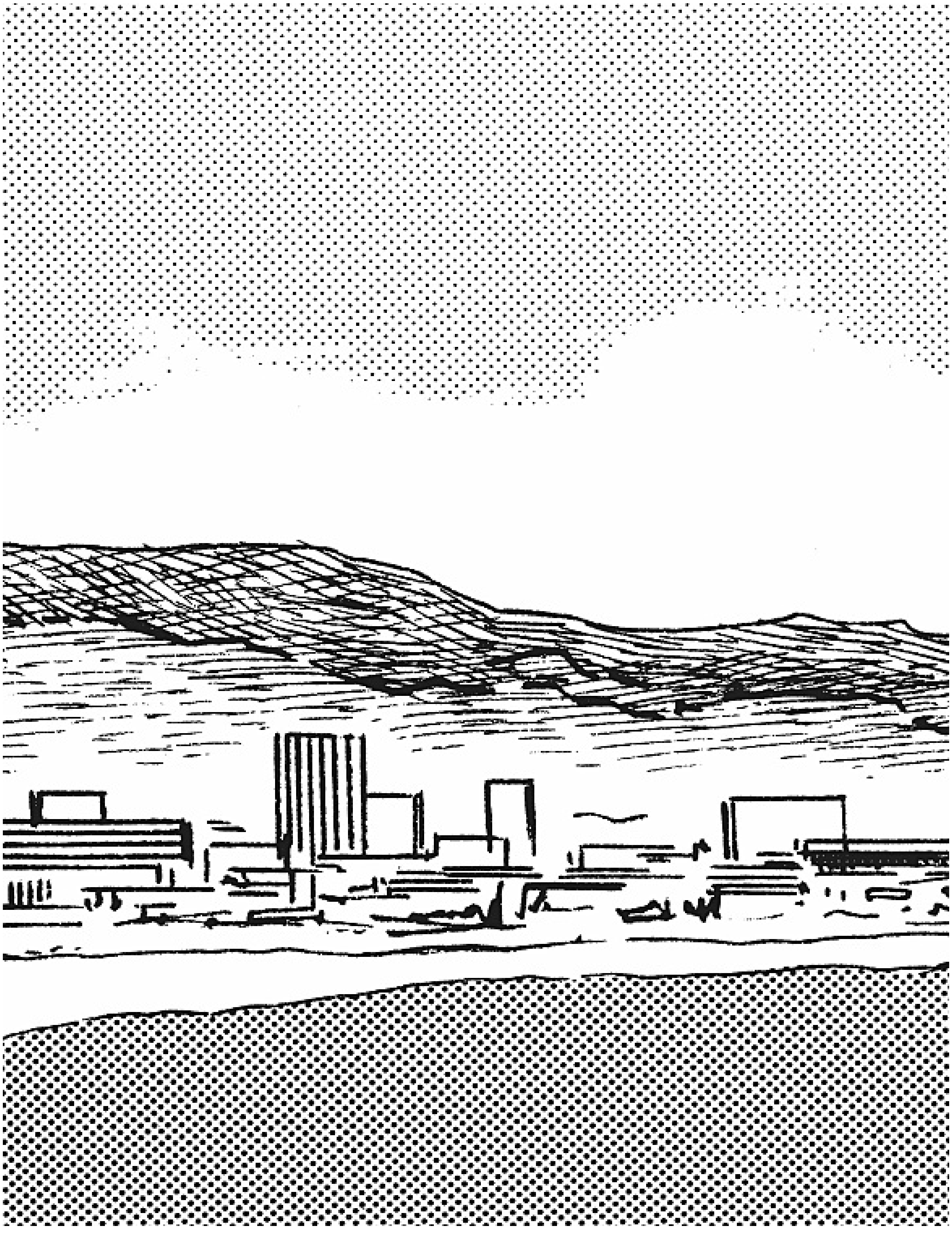

LOOK, KOZEKI'S ...
...FINALLY LOST IT.
...
MIZUNO ...
HEH HEH HEH... A PEACEFUL DEATH.
DYING WITH NO SUFFERING.
IS THERE ANY GREATER JOY?
YUSUKE, IT'S ALL THANKS TO YOU.
BUT... I'M... DEFINITELY ...
...NOT GONNA ...
...DIE ...
... HERE!
THUD

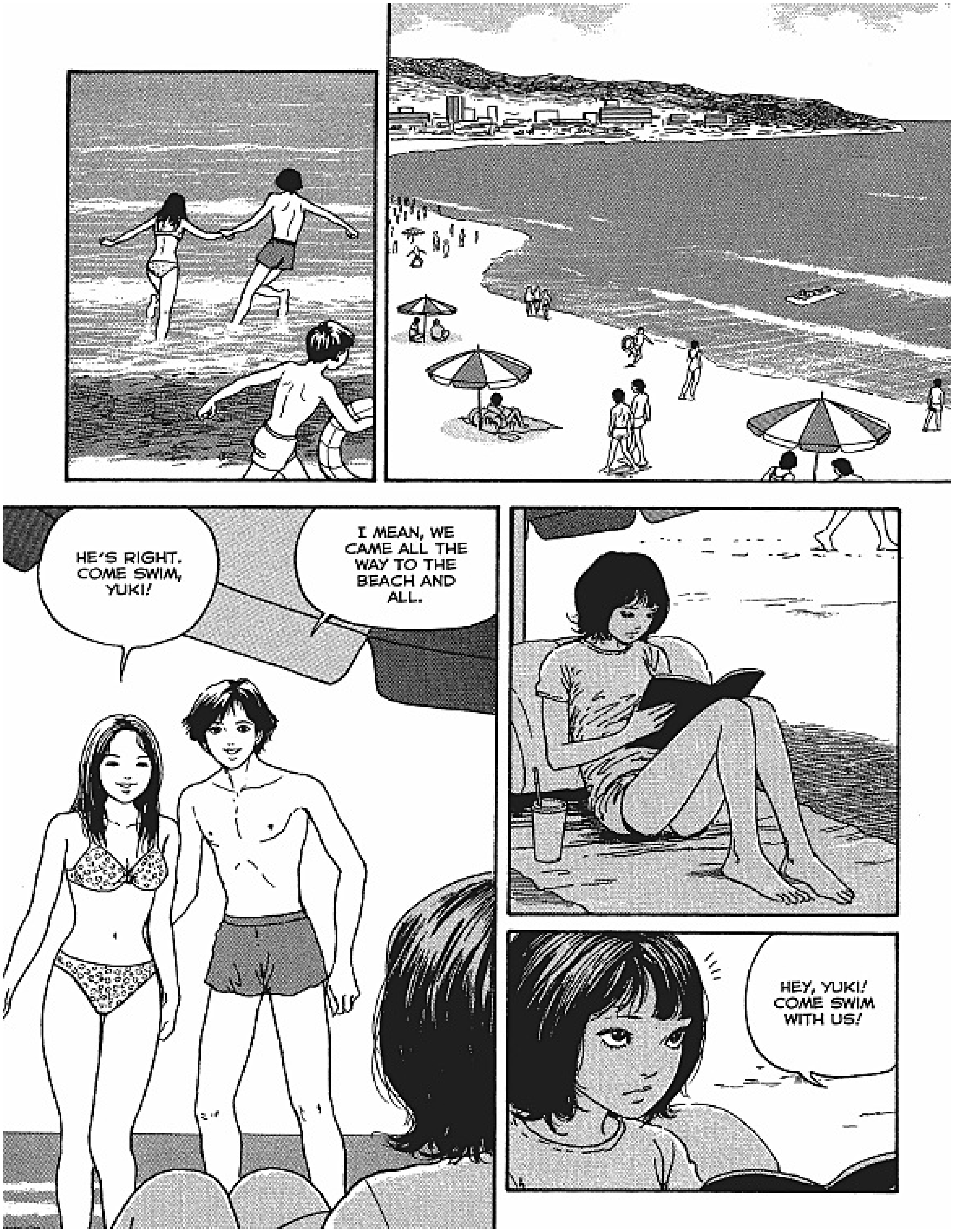

IT HURTS... IT HURTS SO MUCH...
SOMEONE... ANYONE, PLEASE...
IT HURTS...
IT HURTS SO MUCH...
THE MANSION OF PHANTOM PAIN / END

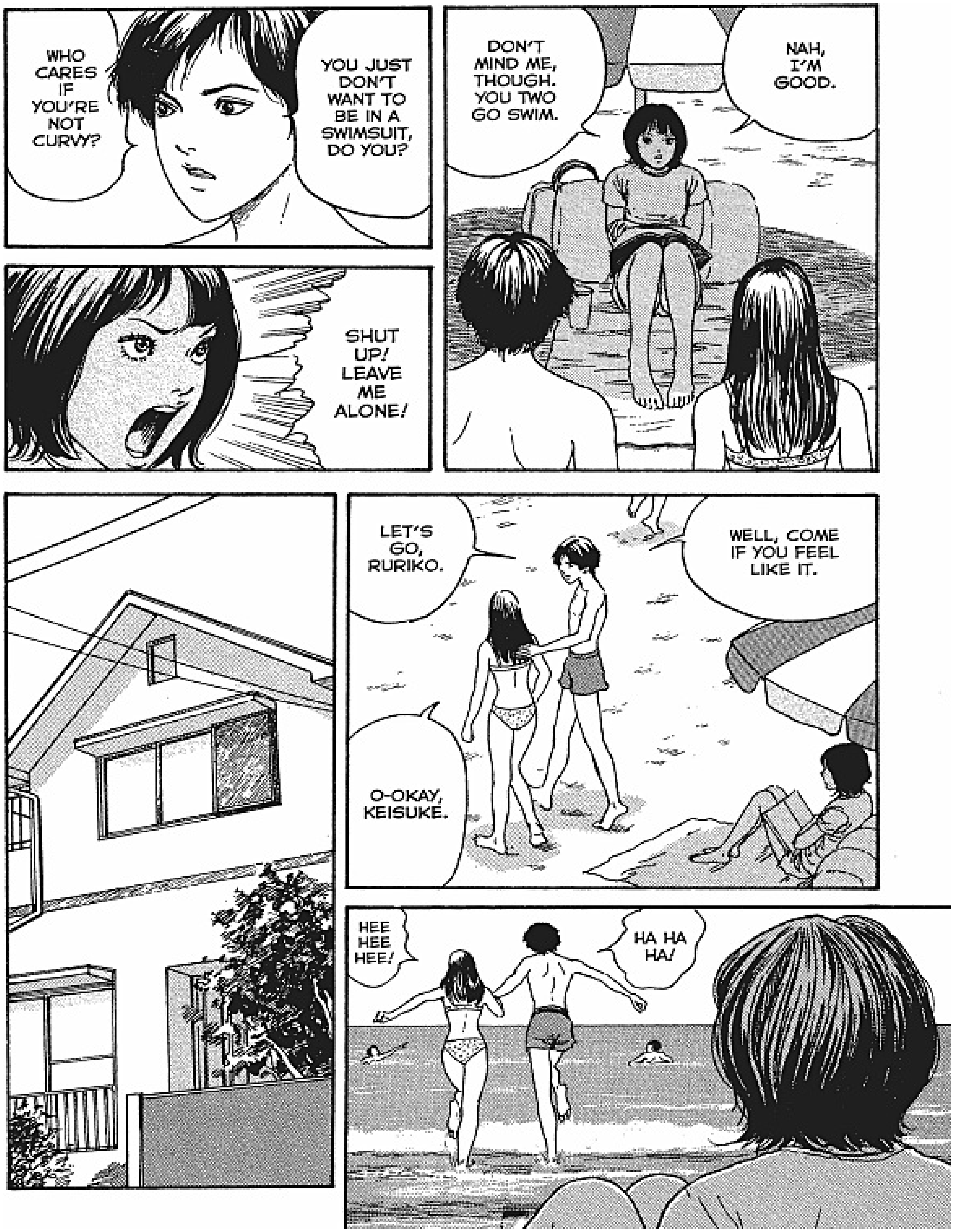
THE RIB WOMAN

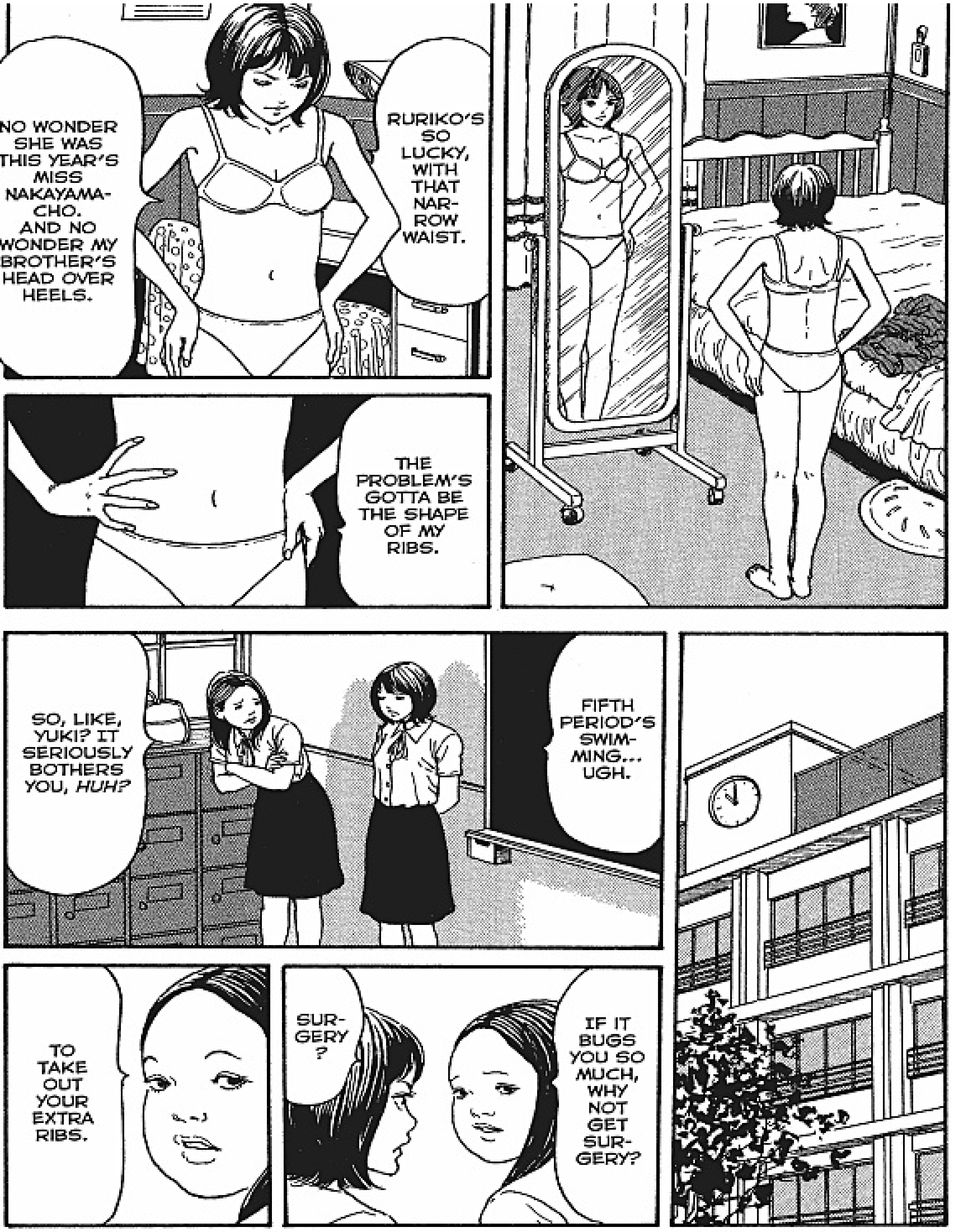
あばら骨の女

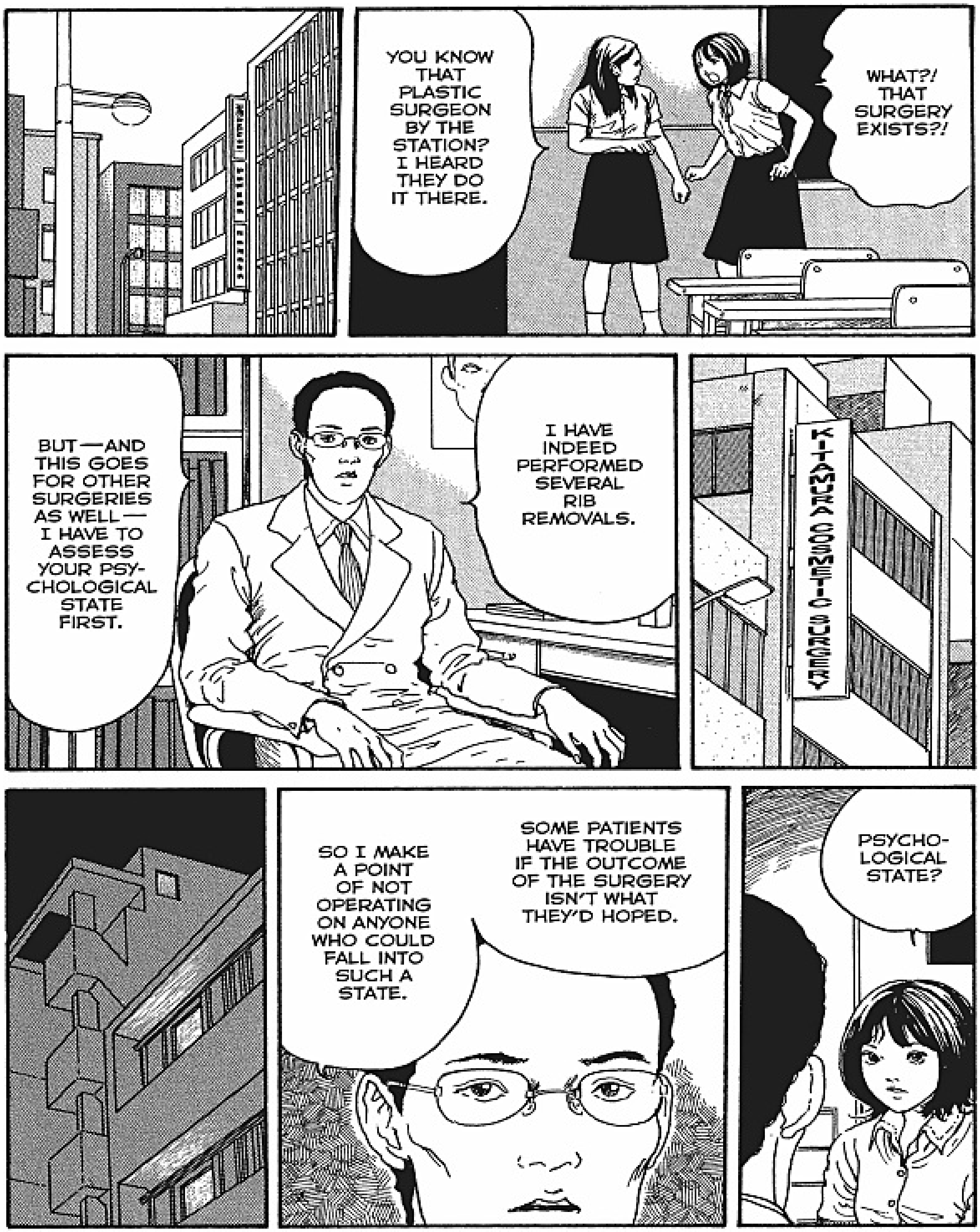


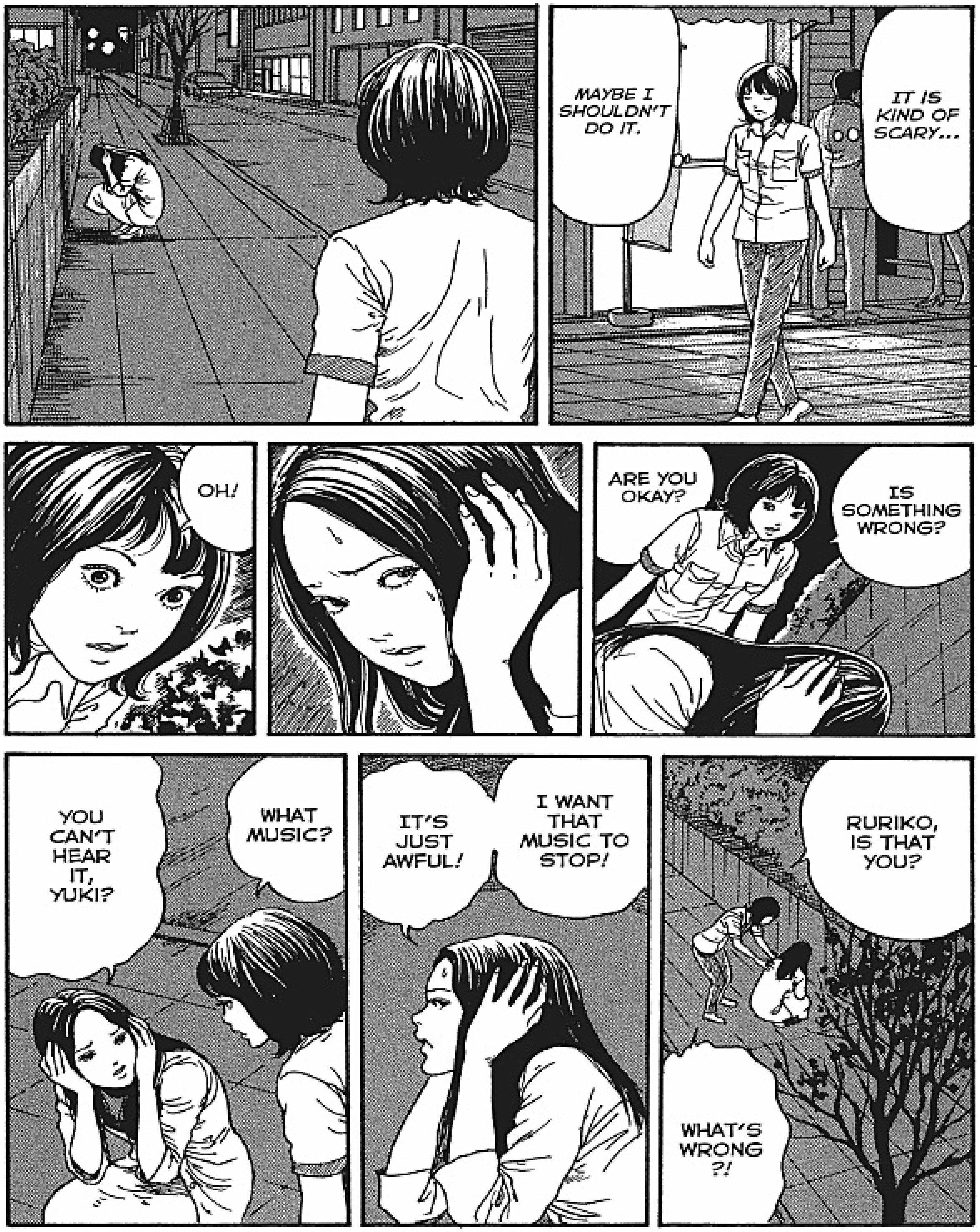


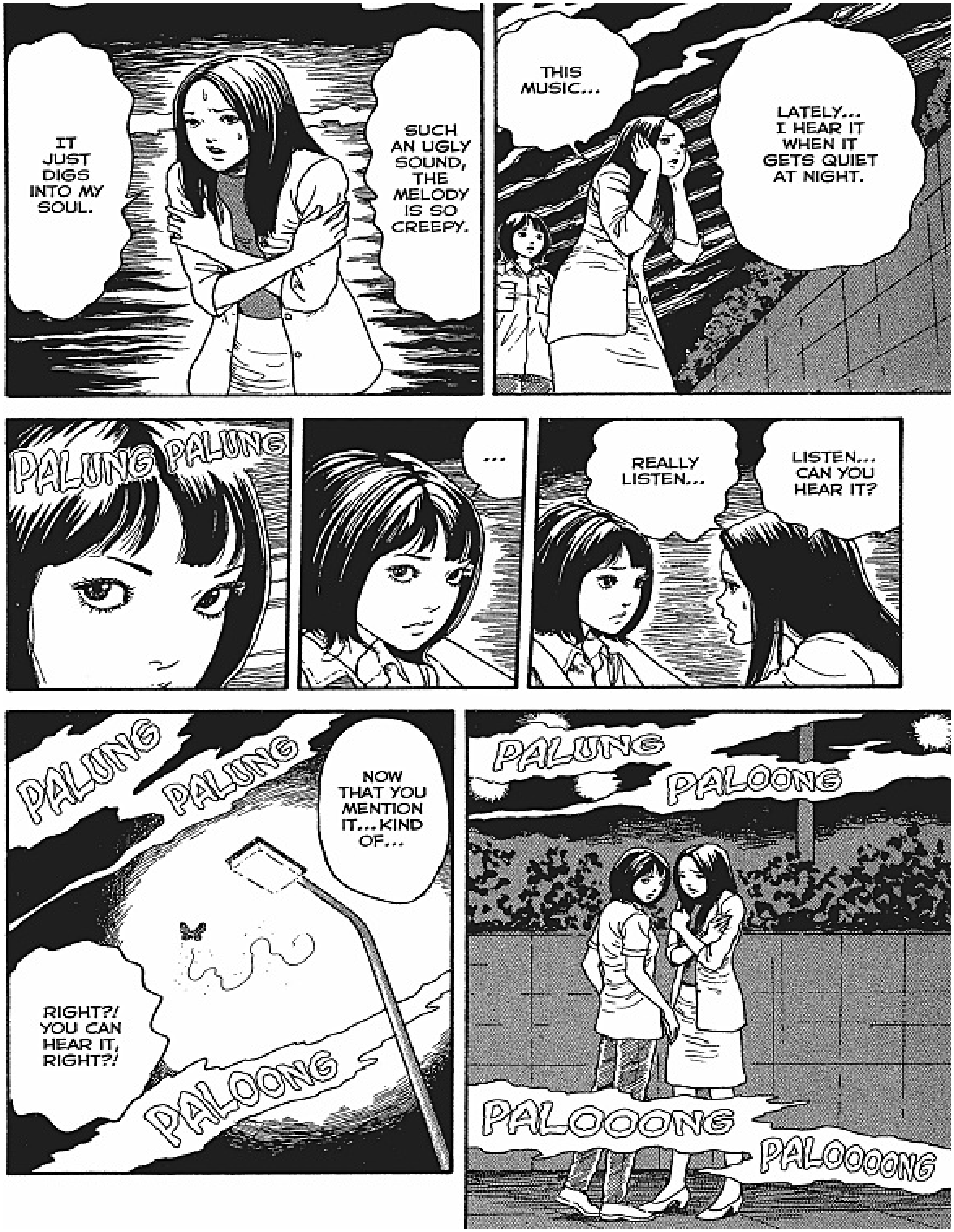

HEY, YUKI! COME SWIM WITH US!
I MEAN, WE CAME ALL THE WAY TO THE BEACH AND ALL.
HE'S RIGHT. COME SWIM, YUKI!

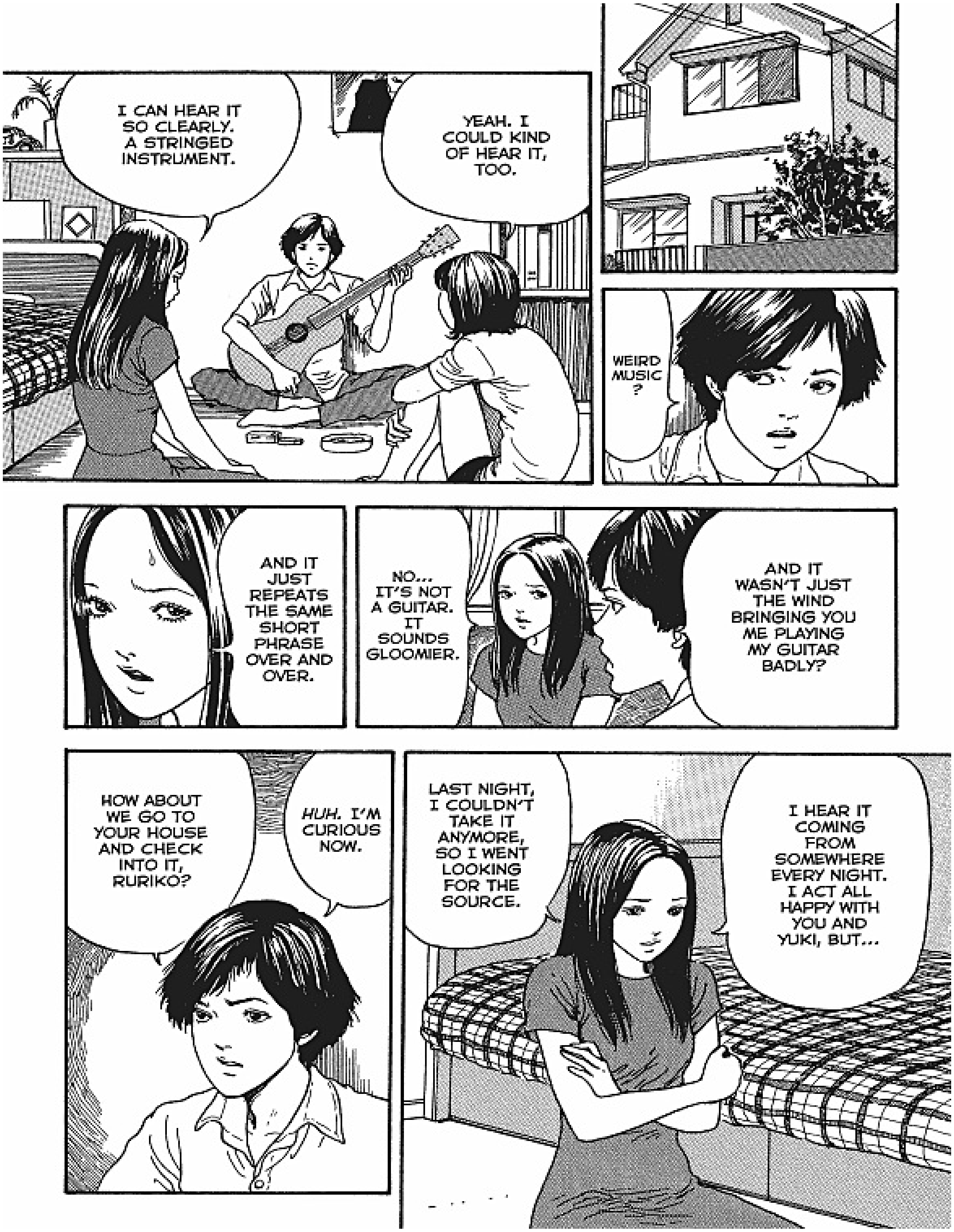

NAH, I'M GOOD.
DON'T MIND ME, THOUGH. YOU TWO GO SWIM.
YOU JUST DON'T WANT TO BE IN A SWIMSUIT, DO YOU?
WHO CARES IF YOU'RE NOT CURVY?
SHUT UP! LEAVE ME ALONE!
WELL, COME IF YOU FEEL LIKE IT.
LET'S GO, RURIKO.
O-OKAY, KEISUKE.
HA HA HA!
HEE HEE HEE!

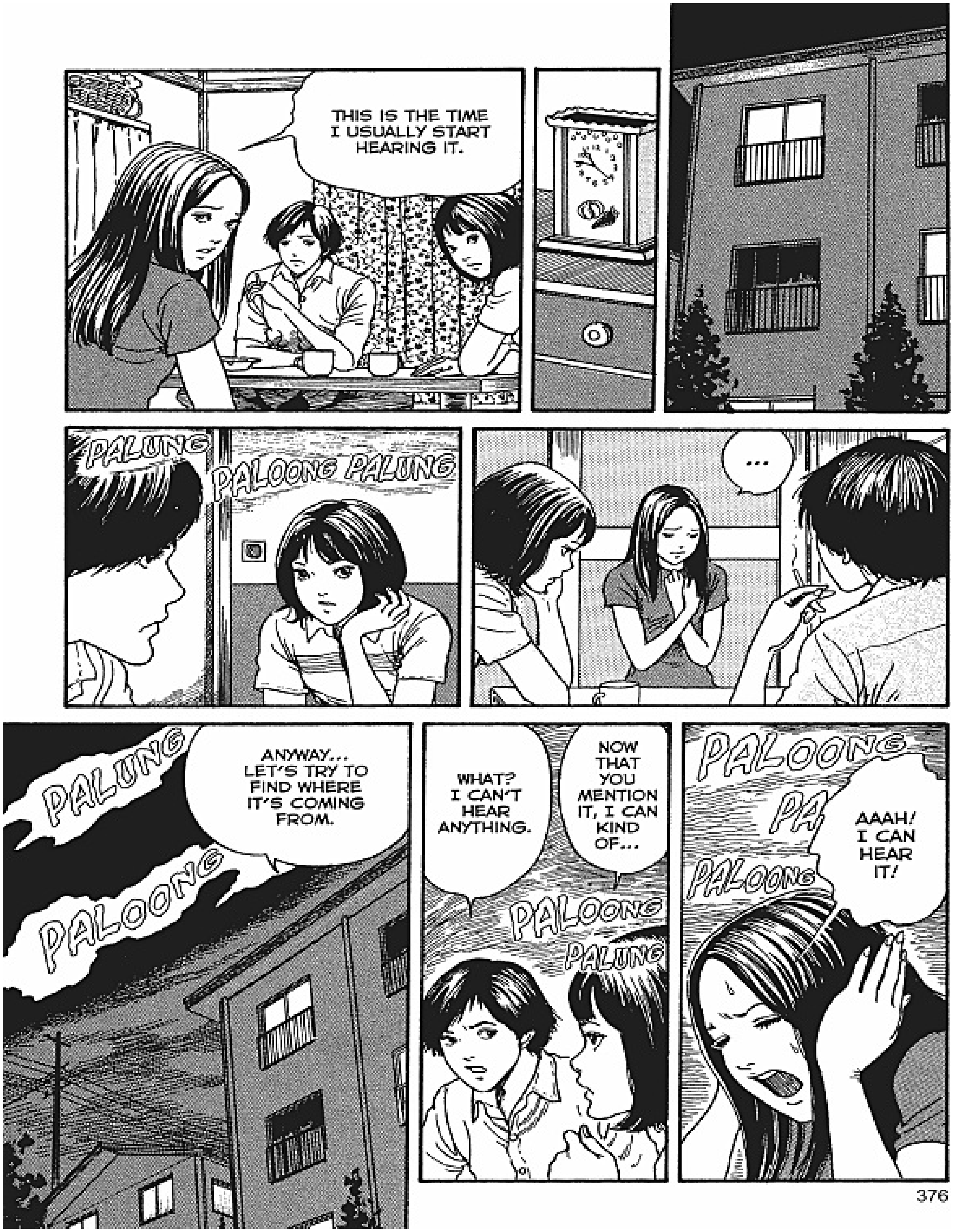

RURIKO'S SO LUCKY, WITH THAT NARROW WAIST.
NO WONDER SHE WAS THIS YEAR'S MISS NAKAYAMA-CHO. AND NO WONDER MY BROTHER'S HEAD OVER HEELS.
THE PROBLEM'S GOTTA BE THE SHAPE OF MY RIBS.
FIFTH PERIOD'S SWIMMING... UGH.
SO, LIKE, YUKI? IT SERIOUSLY BOTHERS YOU, *HUH?*
IF IT BUGS YOU SO MUCH, WHY NOT GET SURGERY?
SURGERY?
TO TAKE OUT YOUR EXTRA RIBS.

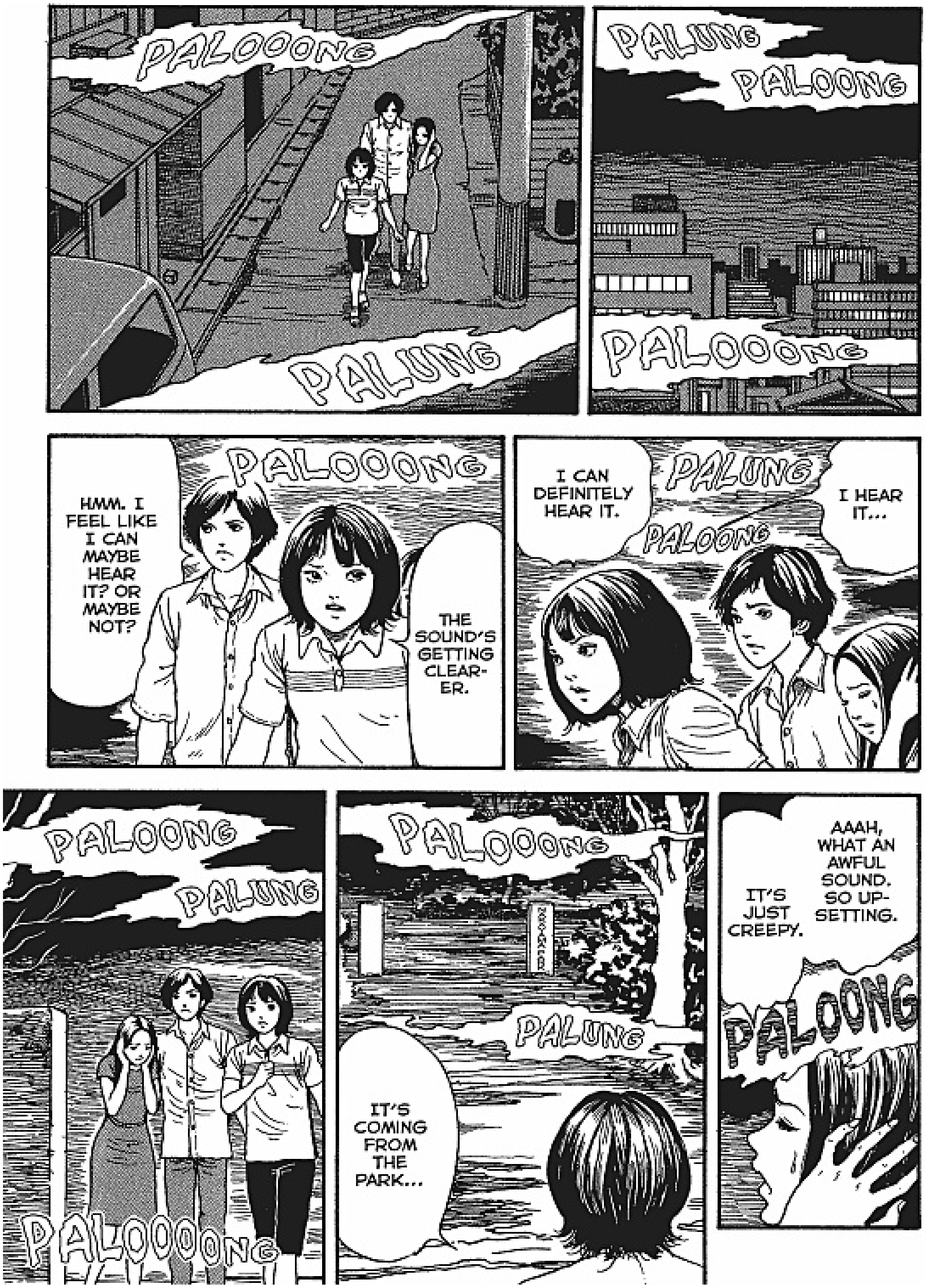

WHAT?! THAT SURGERY EXISTS?!
YOU KNOW THAT PLASTIC SURGEON BY THE STATION? I HEARD THEY DO IT THERE.
KITAMURA COSMETIC SURGERY
I HAVE INDEED PERFORMED SEVERAL RIB REMOVALS.
BUT—AND THIS GOES FOR OTHER SURGERIES AS WELL—I HAVE TO ASSESS YOUR PSYCHOLOGICAL STATE FIRST.
PSYCHOLOGICAL STATE?
SOME PATIENTS HAVE TROUBLE IF THE OUTCOME OF THE SURGERY ISN'T WHAT THEY'D HOPED.
SO I MAKE A POINT OF NOT OPERATING ON ANYONE WHO COULD FALL INTO SUCH A STATE.

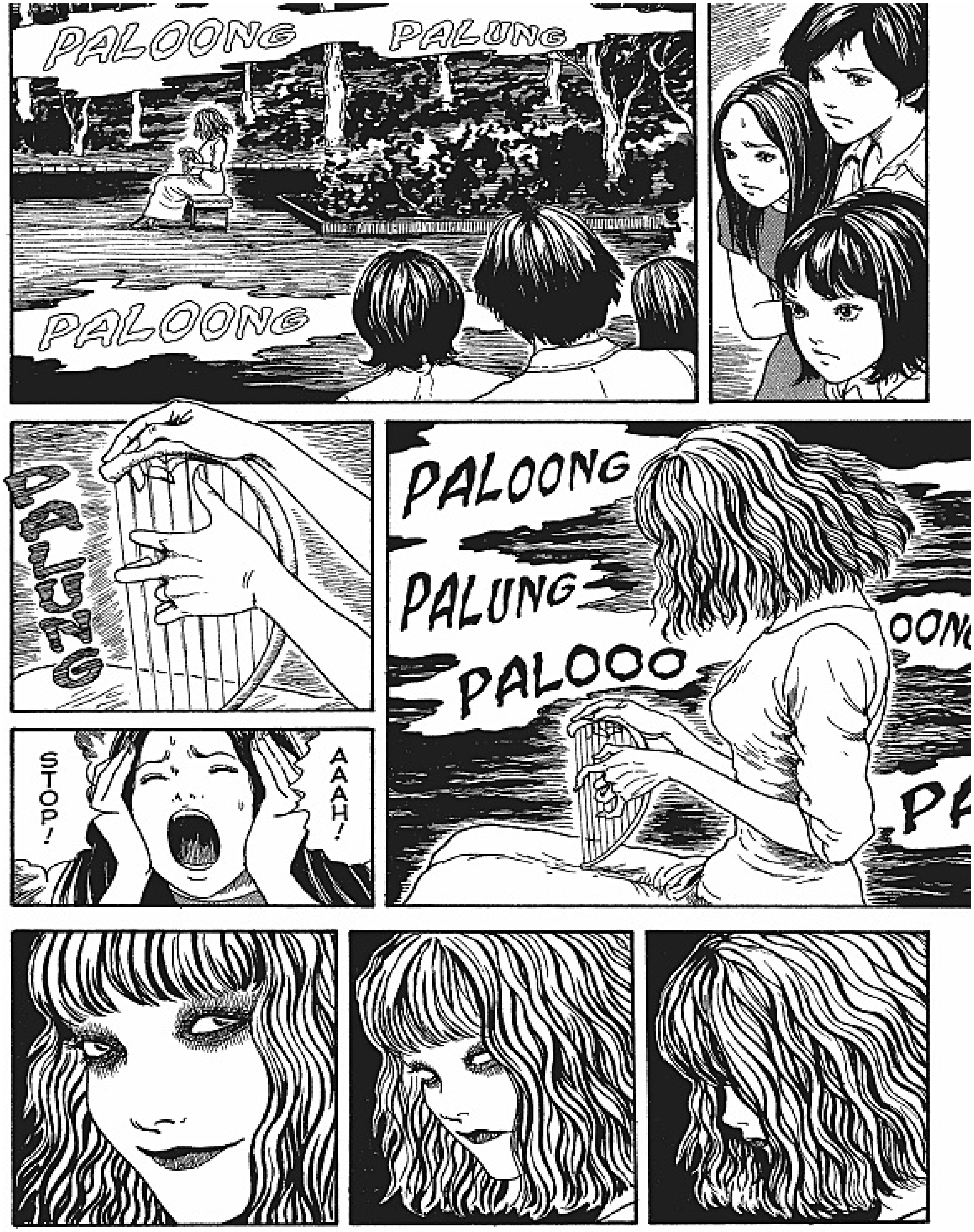

MAYBE I SHOULDN'T DO IT.
IT IS KIND OF SCARY...
OH!
ARE YOU OKAY?
IS SOMETHING WRONG?
YOU CAN'T HEAR IT, YUKI?
WHAT MUSIC?
IT'S JUST AWFUL!
I WANT THAT MUSIC TO STOP!
RURIKO, IS THAT YOU?
WHAT'S WRONG ?!

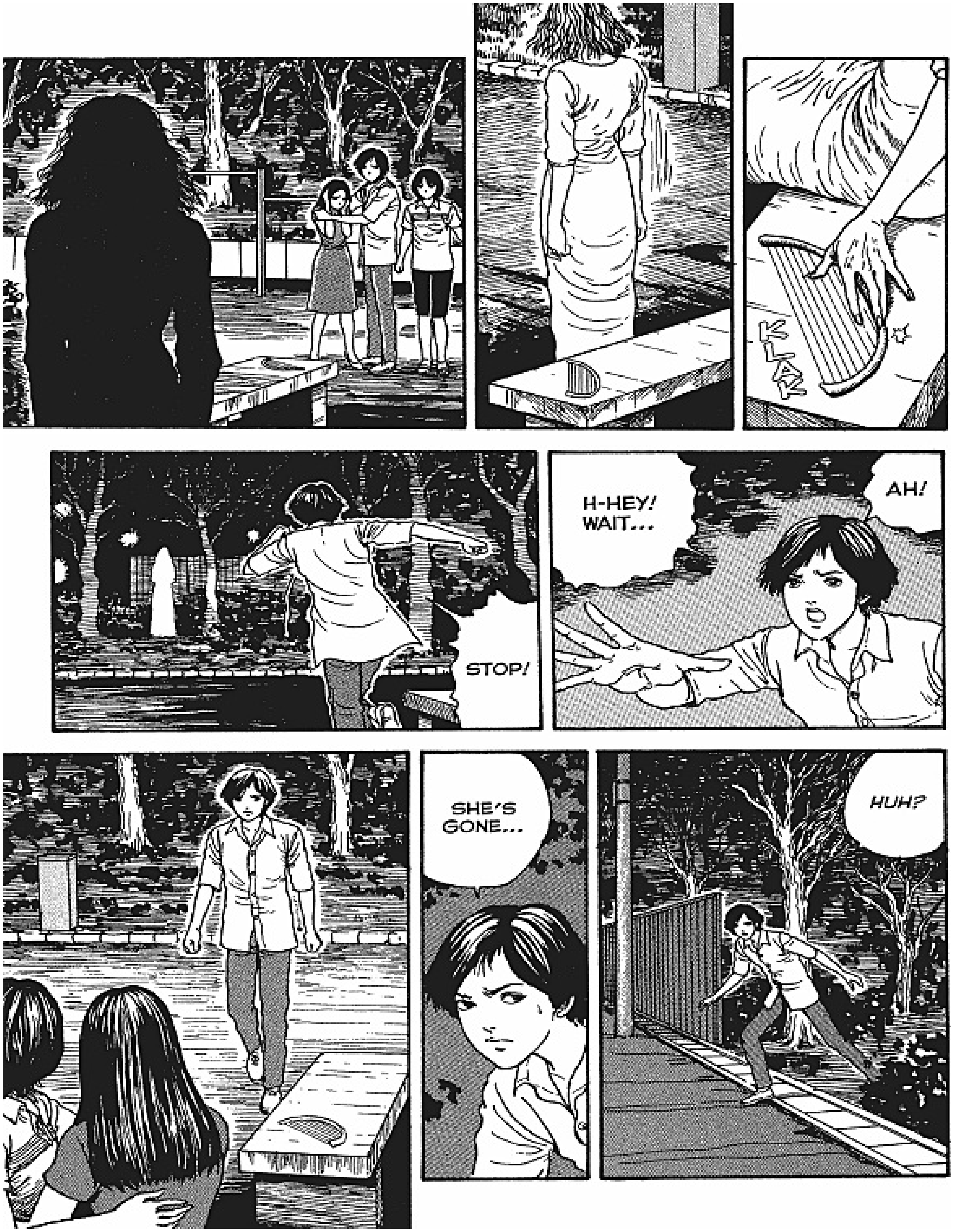

THIS MUSIC...
LATELY... I HEAR IT WHEN IT GETS QUIET AT NIGHT.
SUCH AN UGLY SOUND, THE MELODY IS SO CREEPY.
IT JUST DIGS INTO MY SOUL.
LISTEN... CAN YOU HEAR IT?
REALLY LISTEN...
...
PALUNG PALUNG
PALUNG
PALOONG
PALOOONG
PALOOOONG
PALUNG
PALUNG
NOW THAT YOU MENTION IT...KIND OF...
RIGHT?! YOU CAN HEAR IT, RIGHT?!
PALOONG

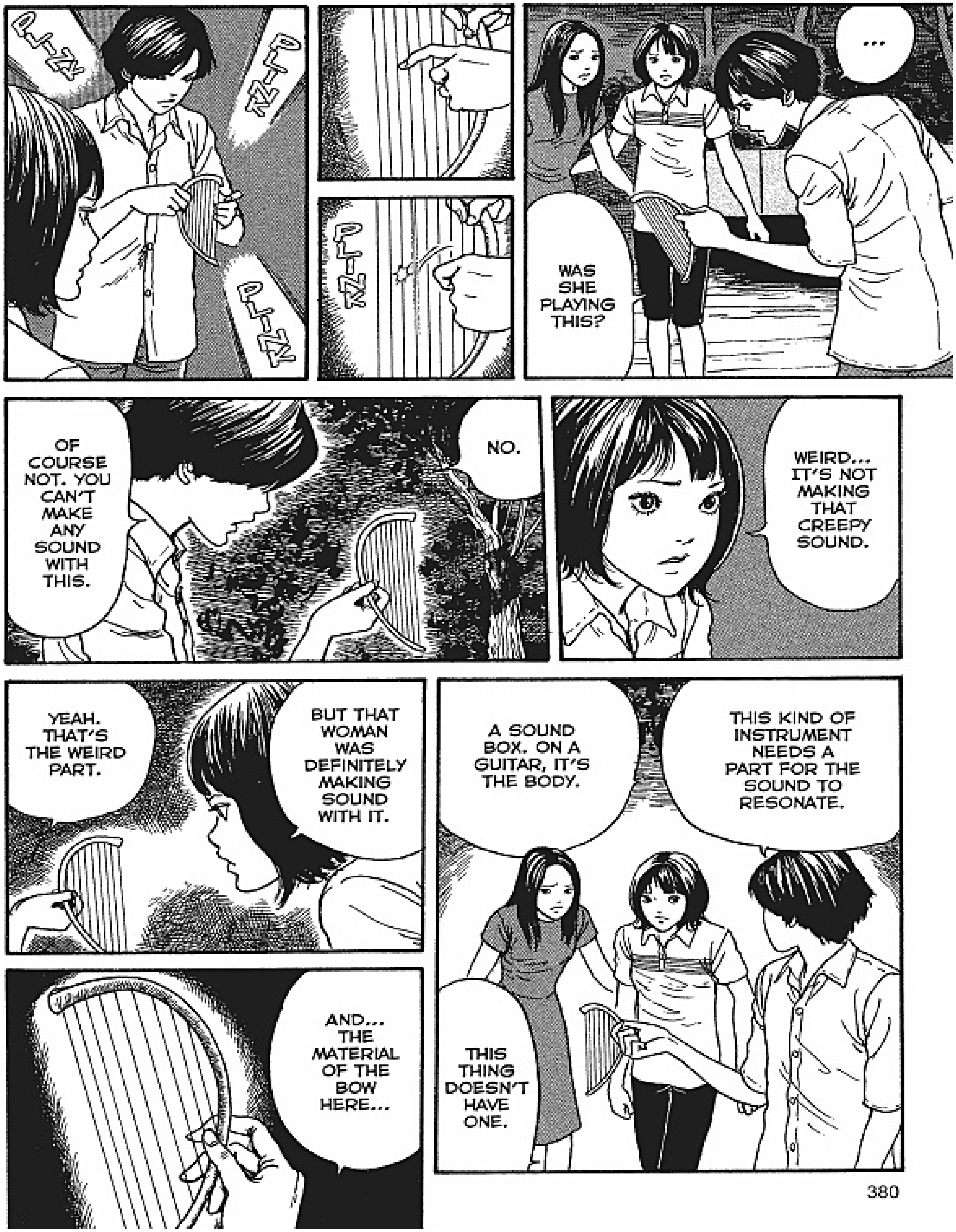

WEIRD MUSIC?
YEAH. I COULD KIND OF HEAR IT, TOO.
I CAN HEAR IT SO CLEARLY. A STRINGED INSTRUMENT.
AND IT WASN'T JUST THE WIND BRINGING YOU ME PLAYING MY GUITAR BADLY?
NO... IT'S NOT A GUITAR. IT SOUNDS GLOOMIER.
AND IT JUST REPEATS THE SAME SHORT PHRASE OVER AND OVER.
I HEAR IT COMING FROM SOMEWHERE EVERY NIGHT. I ACT ALL HAPPY WITH YOU AND YUKI, BUT...
LAST NIGHT, I COULDN'T TAKE IT ANYMORE, SO I WENT LOOKING FOR THE SOURCE.
HUH. I'M CURIOUS NOW.
HOW ABOUT WE GO TO YOUR HOUSE AND CHECK INTO IT, RURIKO?

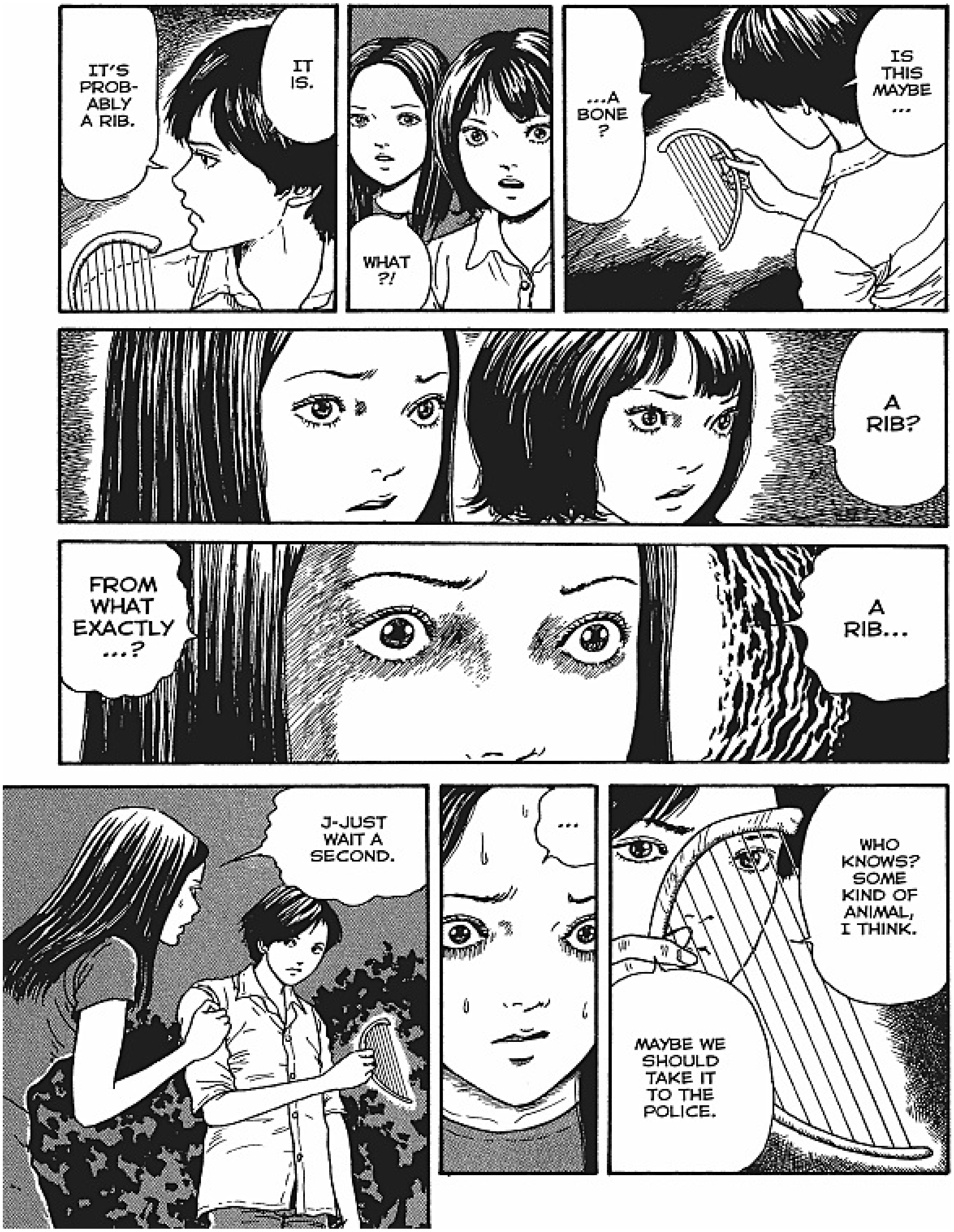

THIS IS THE TIME I USUALLY START HEARING IT.
PALUNG
PALOONG PALUNG
...
PALUNG
PALOONG
ANYWAY... LET'S TRY TO FIND WHERE IT'S COMING FROM.
WHAT? I CAN'T HEAR ANYTHING.
NOW THAT YOU MENTION IT, I CAN KIND OF...
PALOONG
PALUNG
PALOONG
PA
PALOONG
AAAH! I CAN HEAR IT!

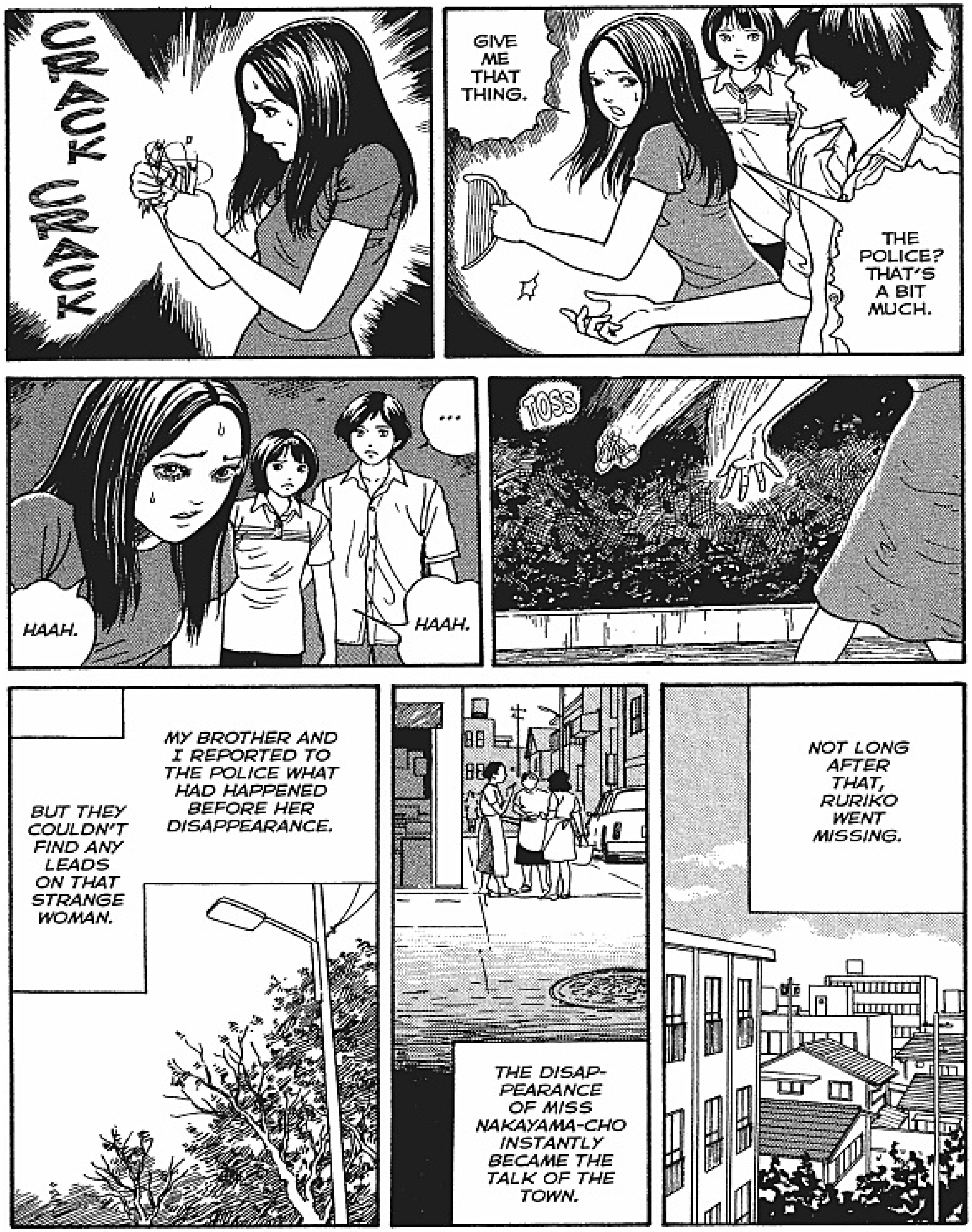

PALUNG
PALOONG
PALOOONG
PALOOONG
PALUNG
I HEAR IT...
PALUNG
PALOONG
I CAN DEFINITELY HEAR IT.
THE SOUND'S GETTING CLEARER.
PALOOONG
HMM. I FEEL LIKE I CAN MAYBE HEAR IT? OR MAYBE NOT?
AAAH, WHAT AN AWFUL SOUND. SO UPSETTING.
IT'S JUST CREEPY.
PALOONG
PALOOONG
PALUNG
IT'S COMING FROM THE PARK...
PALOONG
PALUNG
PALOOOONG

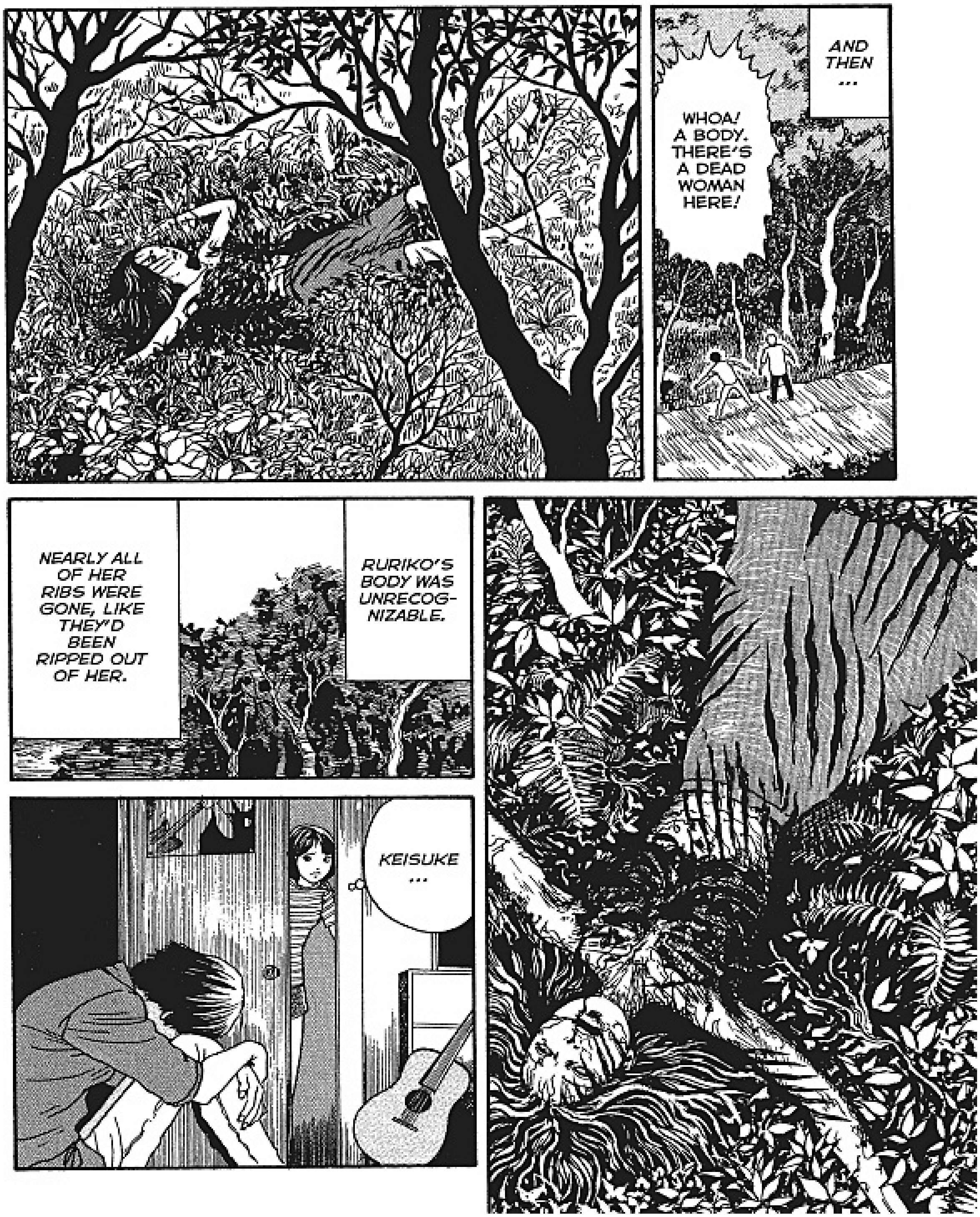

PALOONG
PALUNG
PALOONG
PALOONG
PALUNG
PALOOO
OONG
PA
PALUNG
AAAH!
STOP!

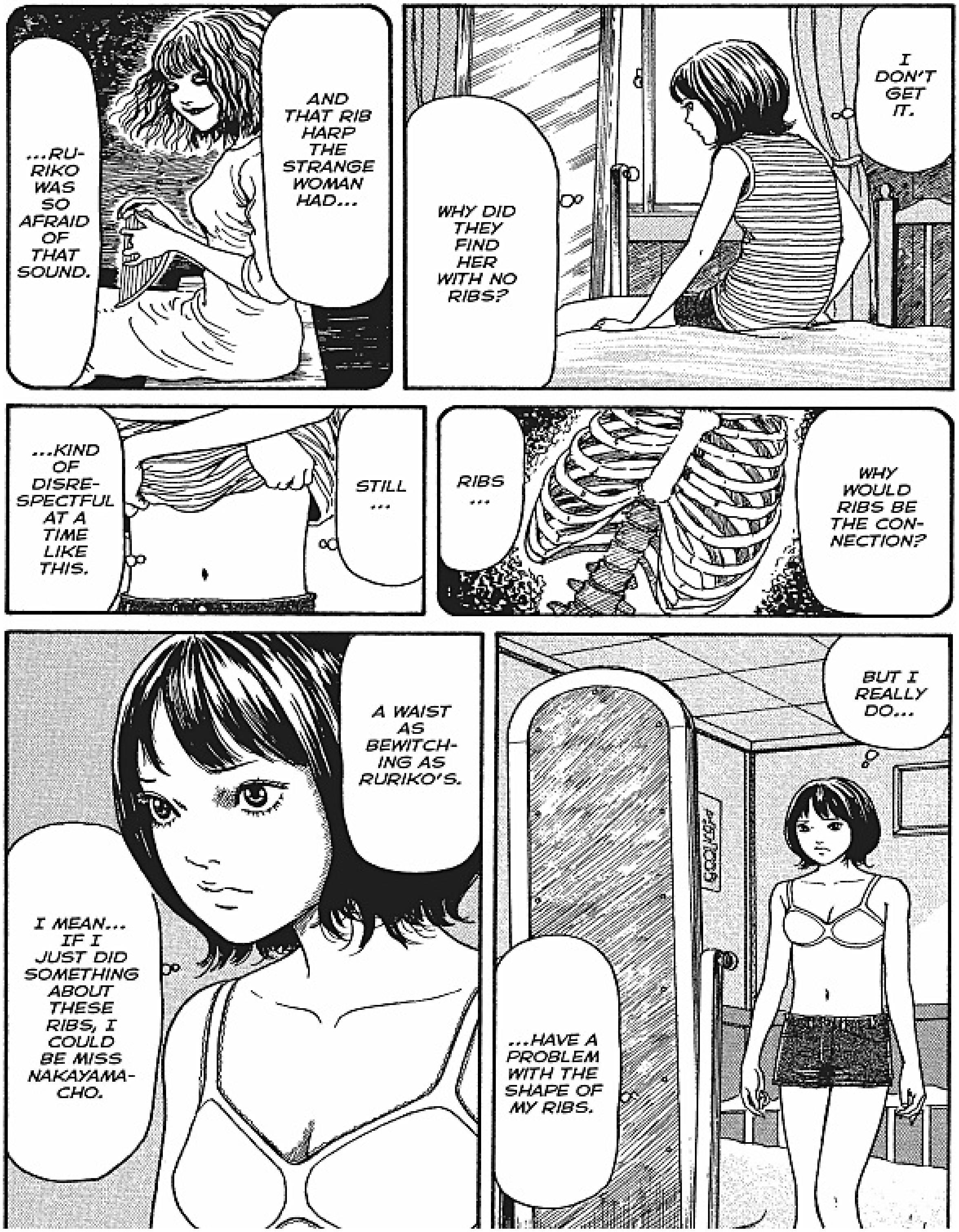

KLAK
STOP!
H-HEY! WAIT...
AH!
SHE'S GONE...
HUH?

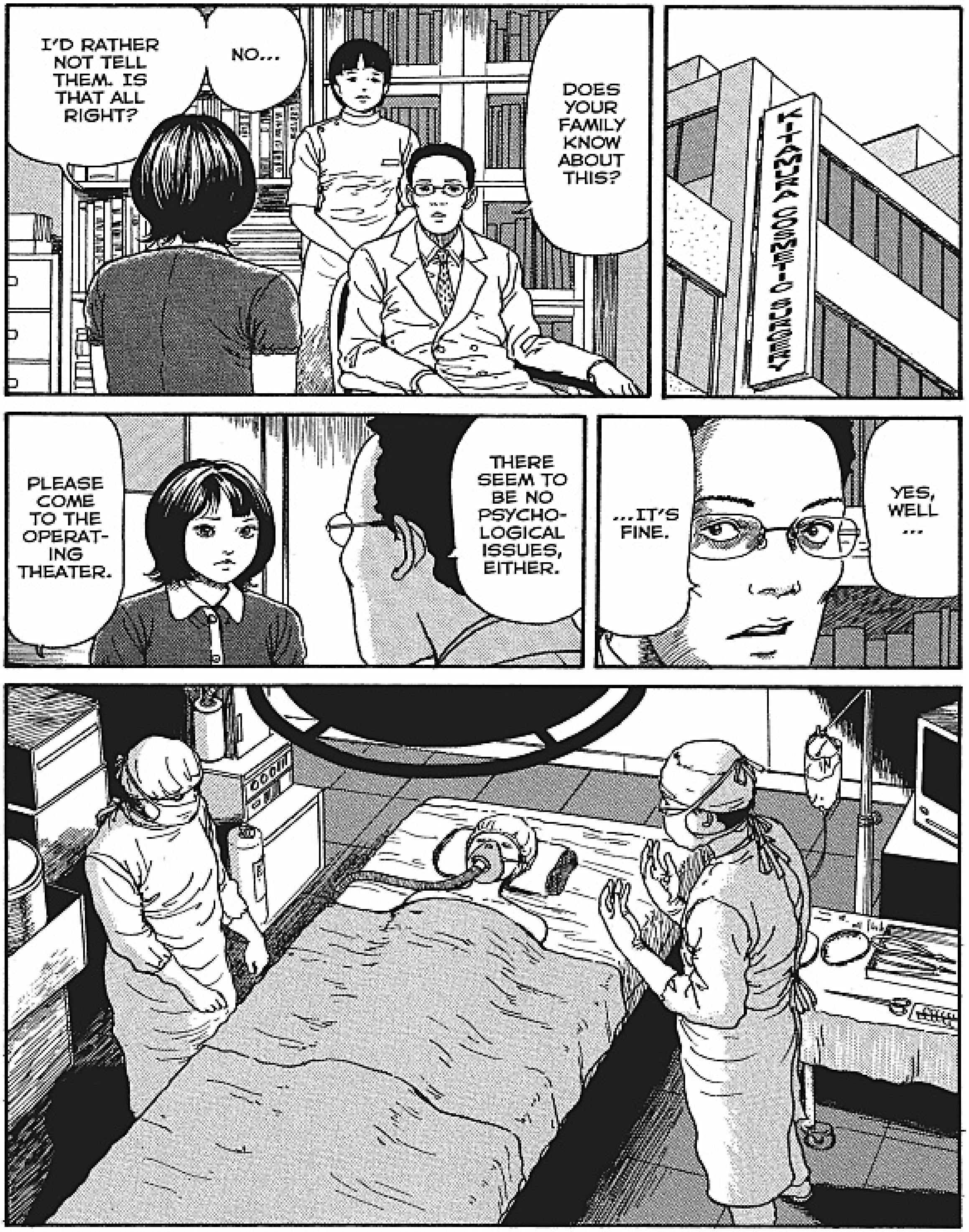

...
WAS SHE PLAYING THIS?
PLINK
PLINK
PLINK
PLINK
WEIRD... IT'S NOT MAKING THAT CREEPY SOUND.
NO.
OF COURSE NOT. YOU CAN'T MAKE ANY SOUND WITH THIS.
THIS KIND OF INSTRUMENT NEEDS A PART FOR THE SOUND TO RESONATE.
A SOUND BOX. ON A GUITAR, IT'S THE BODY.
THIS THING DOESN'T HAVE ONE.
BUT THAT WOMAN WAS DEFINITELY MAKING SOUND WITH IT.
YEAH. THAT'S THE WEIRD PART.
AND... THE MATERIAL OF THE BOW HERE...

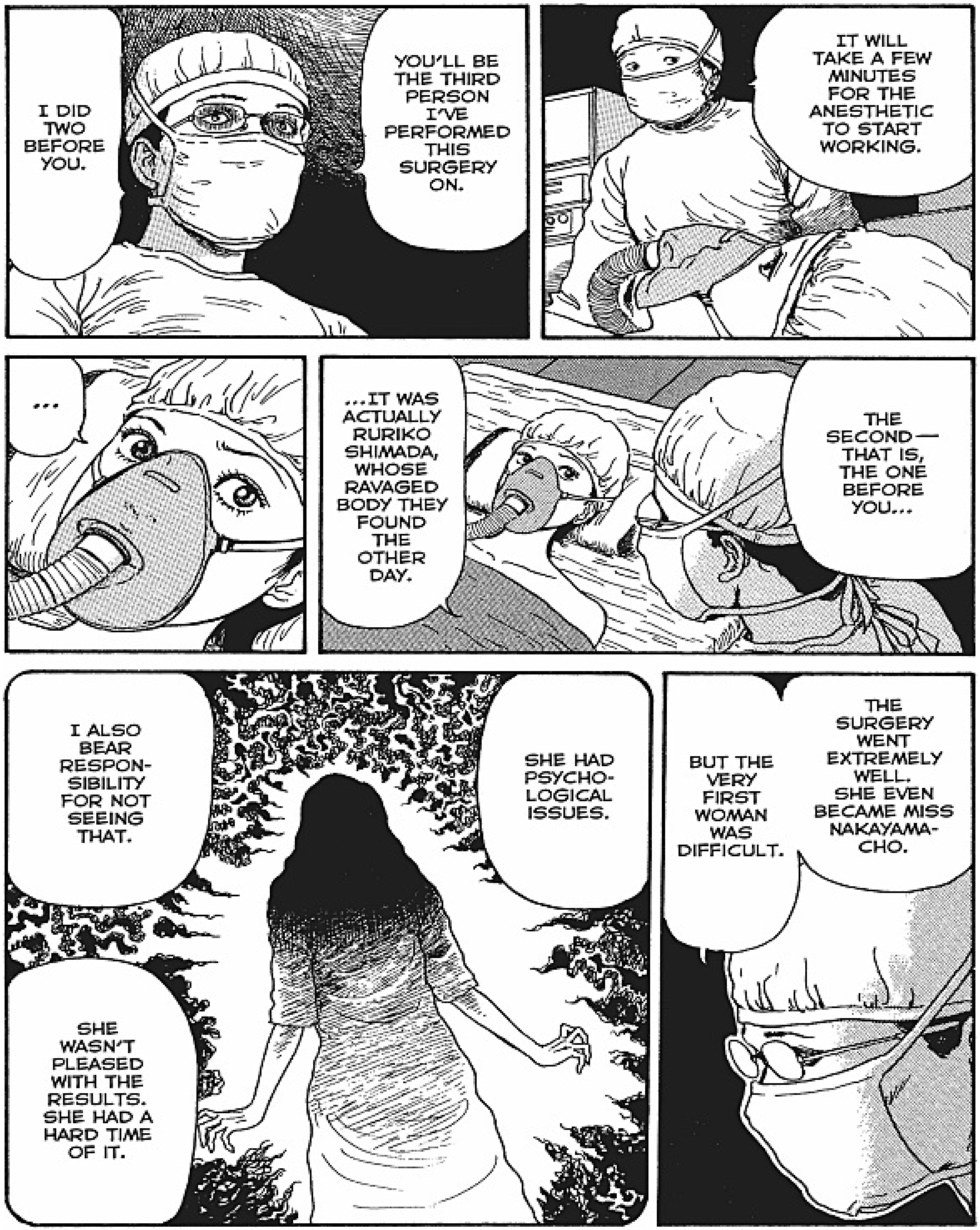

IS THIS MAYBE ...
...A BONE?
WHAT?!
IT IS.
IT'S PROBABLY A RIB.
A RIB?
A RIB...
FROM WHAT EXACTLY ...?
WHO KNOWS? SOME KIND OF ANIMAL, I THINK.
MAYBE WE SHOULD TAKE IT TO THE POLICE.
...
J-JUST WAIT A SECOND.

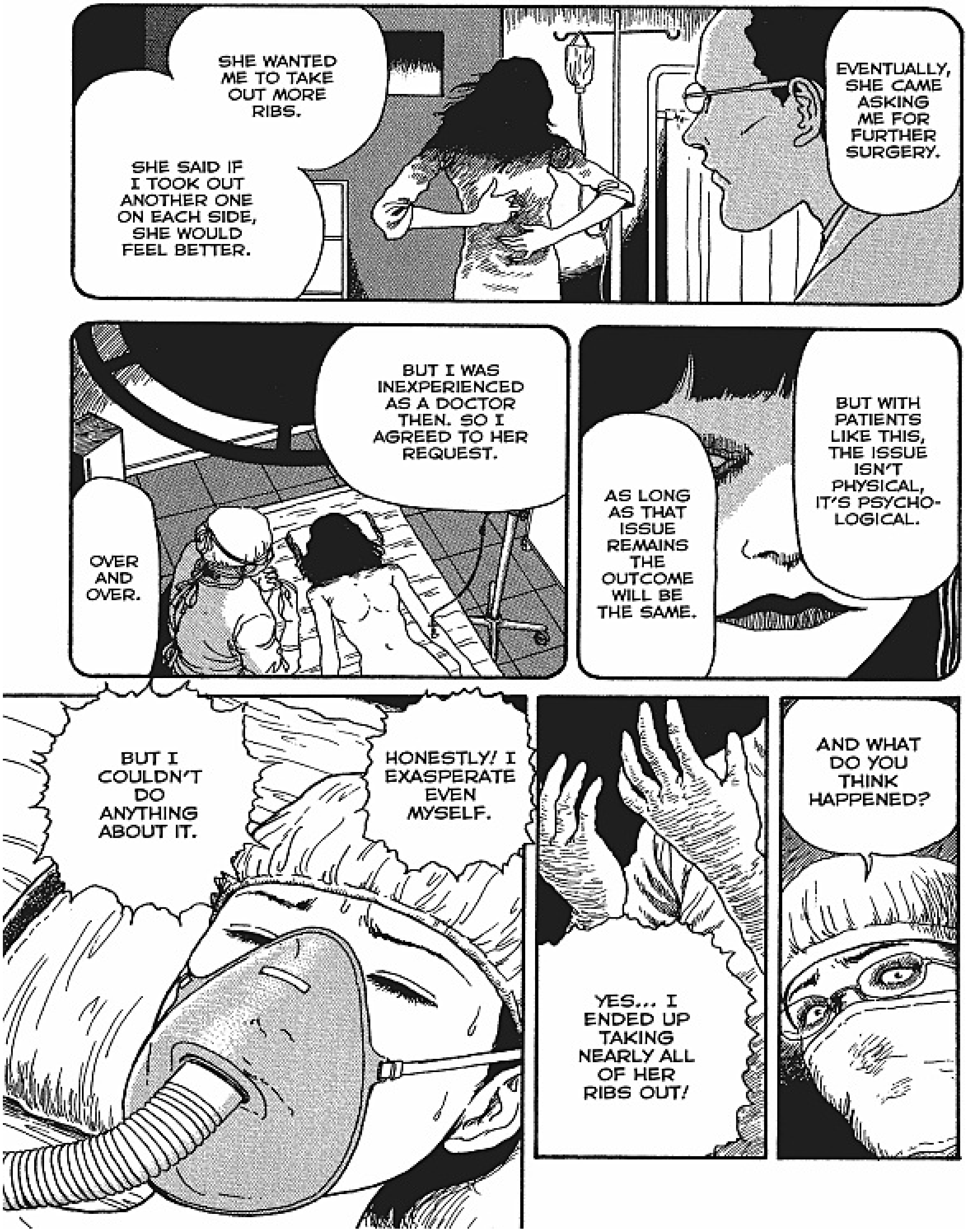

THE POLICE? THAT'S A BIT MUCH.
GIVE ME THAT THING.
CRACK CRACK
TOSS
...
HAAH.
HAAH.
NOT LONG AFTER THAT, RURIKO WENT MISSING.
THE DISAPPEARANCE OF MISS NAKAYAMA-CHO INSTANTLY BECAME THE TALK OF THE TOWN.
MY BROTHER AND I REPORTED TO THE POLICE WHAT HAD HAPPENED BEFORE HER DISAPPEARANCE.
BUT THEY COULDN'T FIND ANY LEADS ON THAT STRANGE WOMAN.

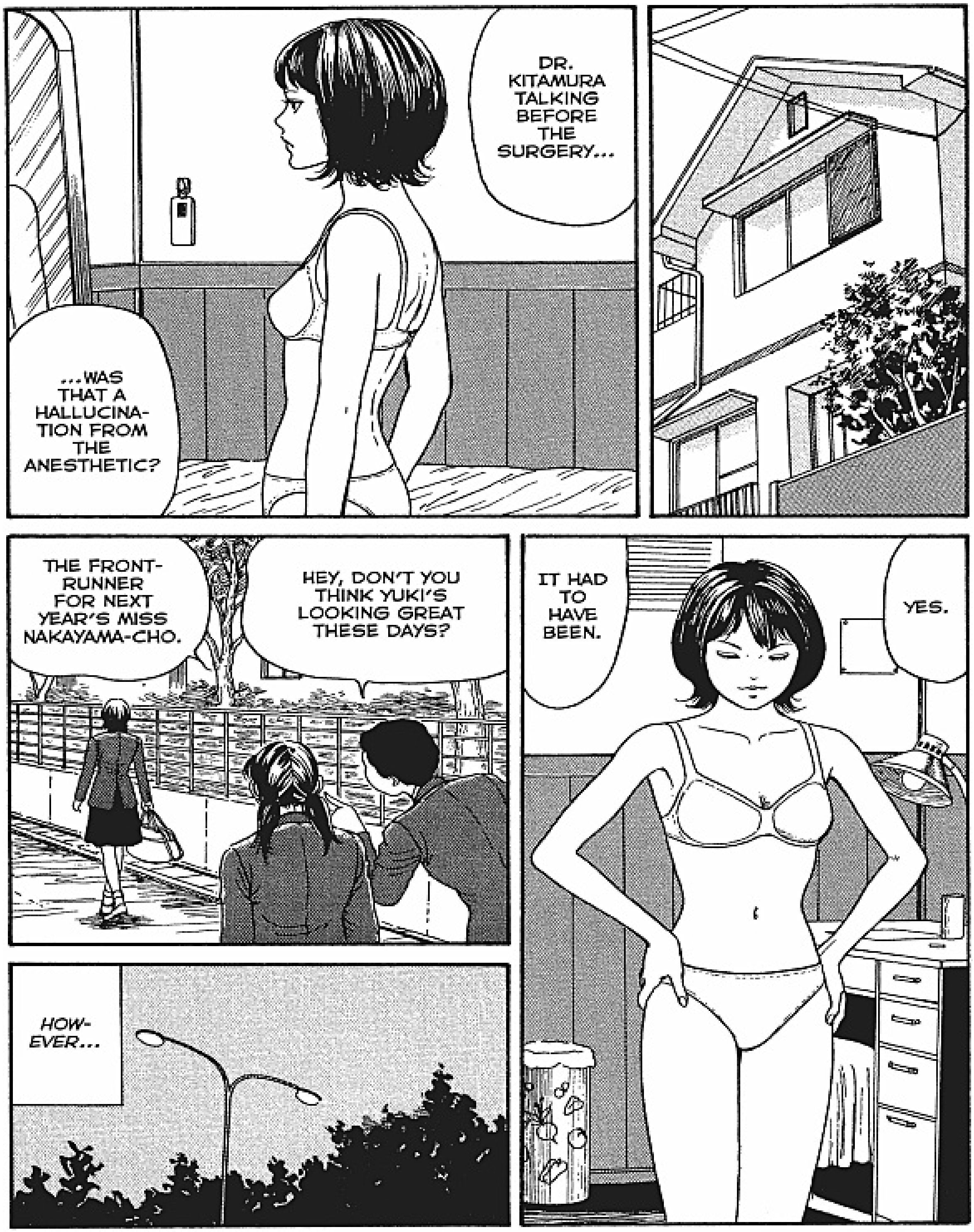

AND THEN ...
WHOA! A BODY. THERE'S A DEAD WOMAN HERE!
RURIKO'S BODY WAS UNRECOGNIZABLE.
NEARLY ALL OF HER RIBS WERE GONE, LIKE THEY'D BEEN RIPPED OUT OF HER.
KEISUKE ...

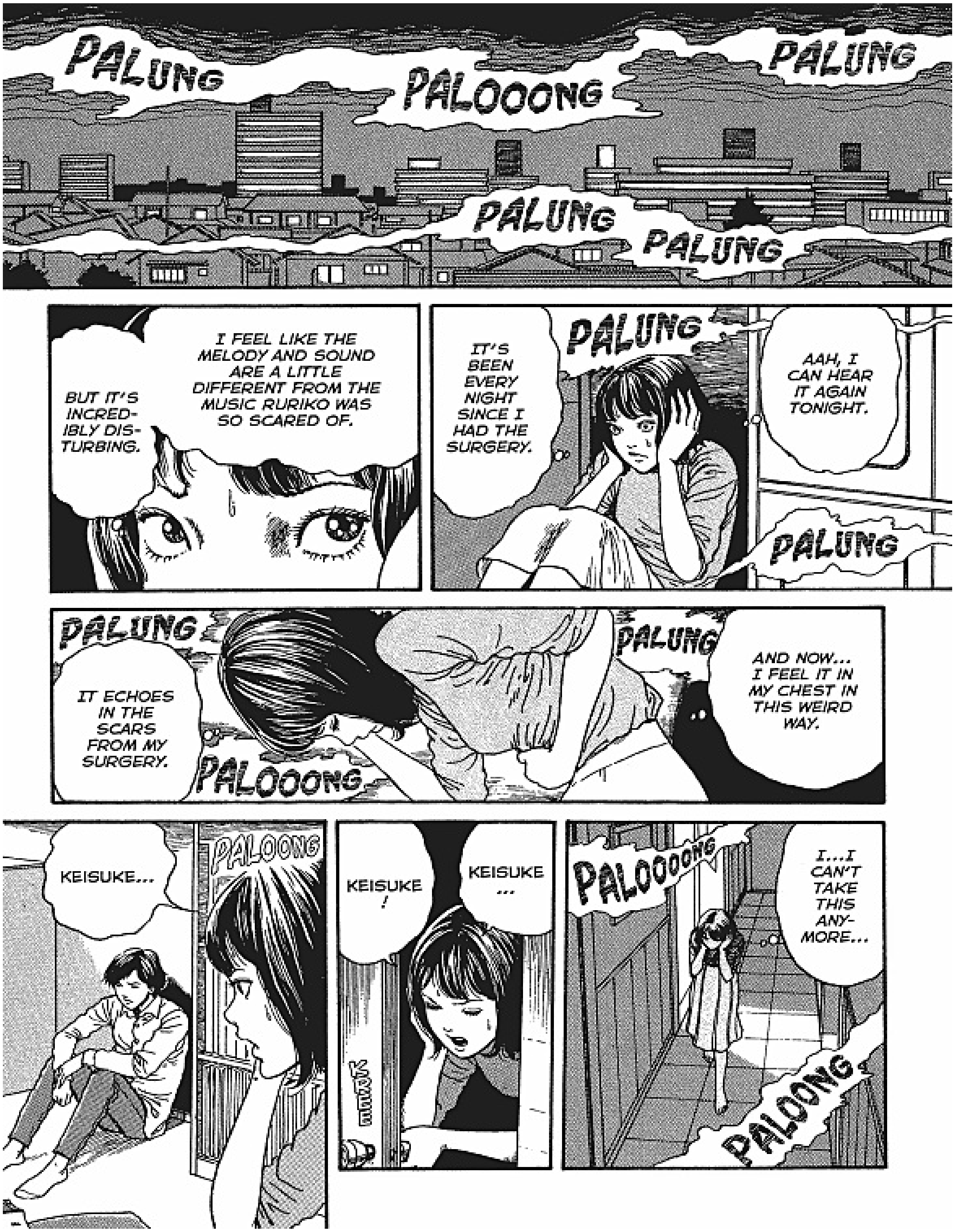

I DON'T GET IT.
WHY DID THEY FIND HER WITH NO RIBS?
AND THAT RIB HARP THE STRANGE WOMAN HAD...
...RURIKO WAS SO AFRAID OF THAT SOUND.
WHY WOULD RIBS BE THE CONNECTION?
RIBS...
STILL...
...KIND OF DISRESPECTFUL AT A TIME LIKE THIS.
BUT I REALLY DO...
...HAVE A PROBLEM WITH THE SHAPE OF MY RIBS.
A WAIST AS BEWITCHING AS RURIKO'S.
I MEAN... IF I JUST DID SOMETHING ABOUT THESE RIBS, I COULD BE MISS NAKAYAMA-CHO.

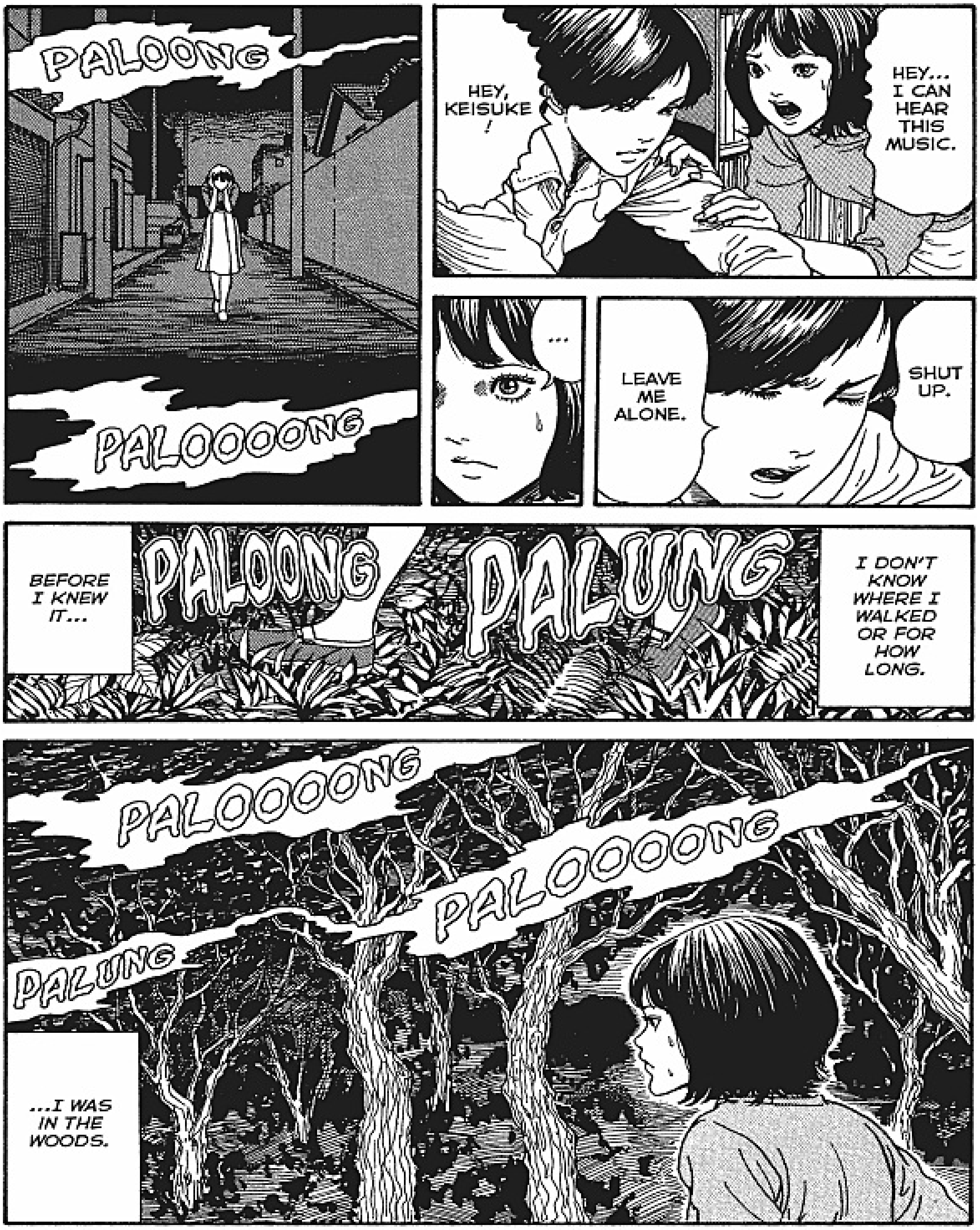

KITAMURA COSMETIC SURGERY
DOES YOUR FAMILY KNOW ABOUT THIS?
NO...
I'D RATHER NOT TELL THEM. IS THAT ALL RIGHT?
YES, WELL ...
...IT'S FINE.
THERE SEEM TO BE NO PSYCHOLOGICAL ISSUES, EITHER.
PLEASE COME TO THE OPERATING THEATER.

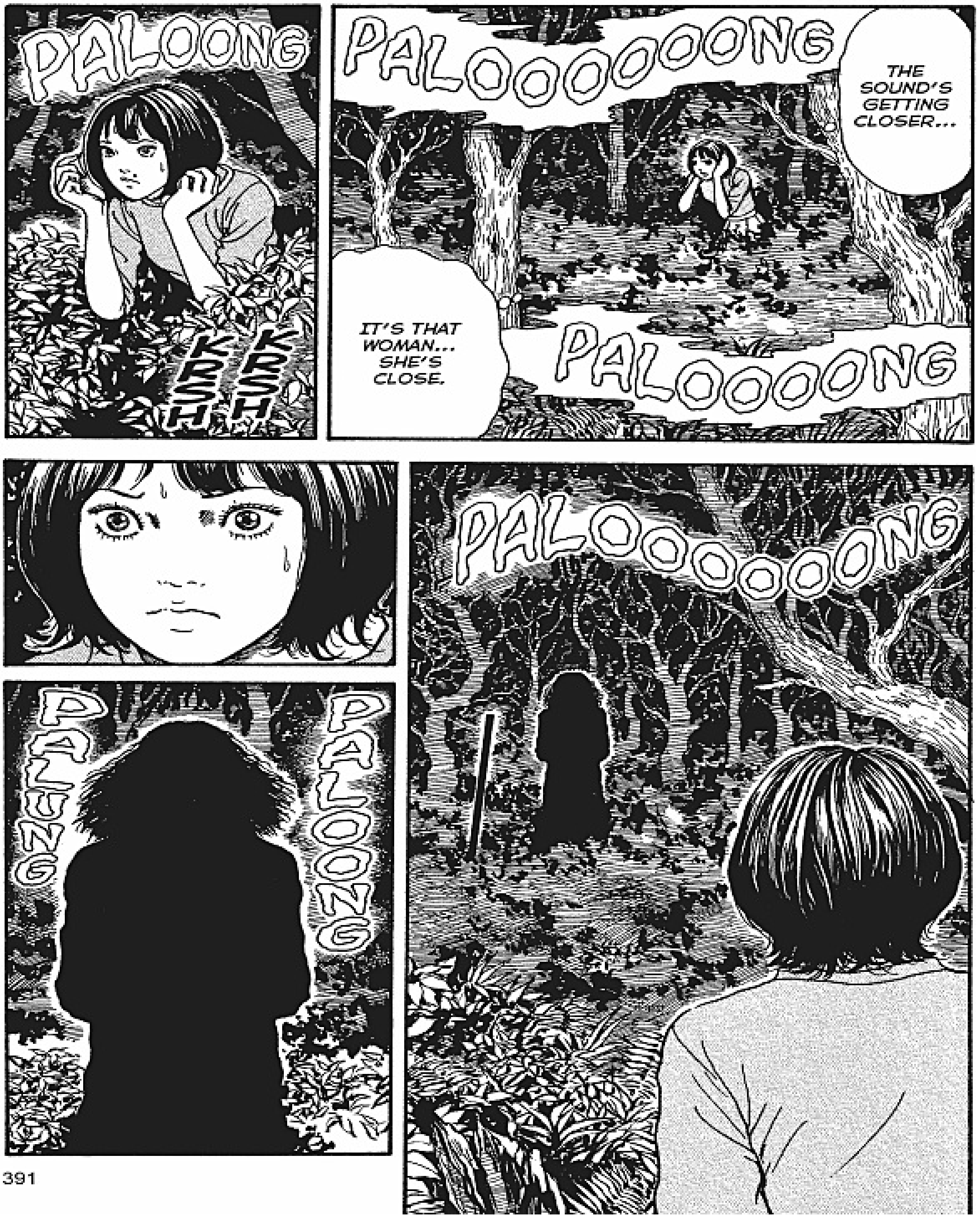

IT WILL TAKE A FEW MINUTES FOR THE ANESTHETIC TO START WORKING.
YOU'LL BE THE THIRD PERSON I'VE PERFORMED THIS SURGERY ON.
I DID TWO BEFORE YOU.
THE SECOND—THAT IS, THE ONE BEFORE YOU...
...IT WAS ACTUALLY RURIKO SHIMADA, WHOSE RAVAGED BODY THEY FOUND THE OTHER DAY.
...
THE SURGERY WENT EXTREMELY WELL. SHE EVEN BECAME MISS NAKAYAMA-CHO.
BUT THE VERY FIRST WOMAN WAS DIFFICULT.
SHE HAD PSYCHOLOGICAL ISSUES.
I ALSO BEAR RESPONSIBILITY FOR NOT SEEING THAT.
SHE WASN'T PLEASED WITH THE RESULTS. SHE HAD A HARD TIME OF IT.

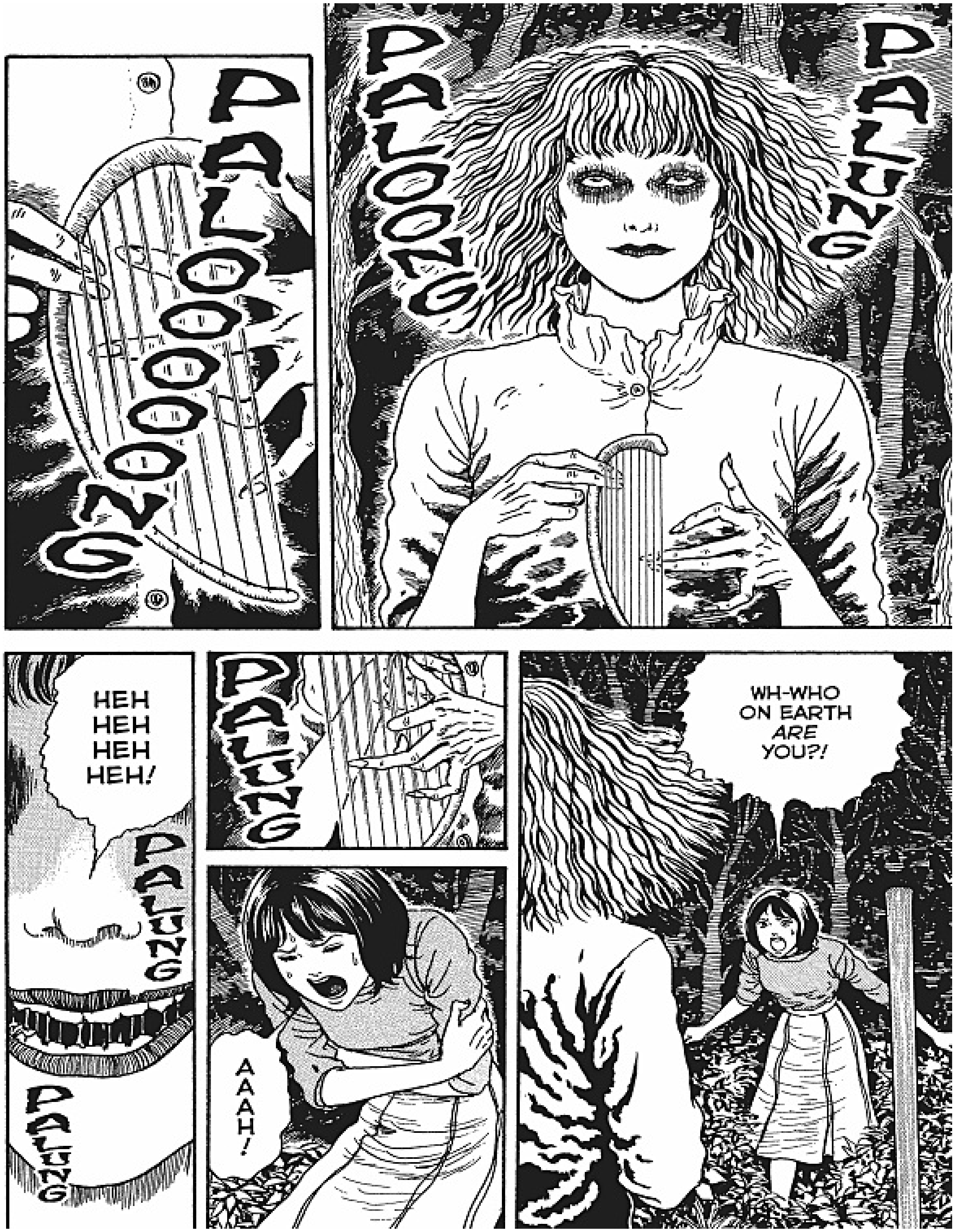

EVENTUALLY, SHE CAME ASKING ME FOR FURTHER SURGERY.
SHE WANTED ME TO TAKE OUT MORE RIBS.
SHE SAID IF I TOOK OUT ANOTHER ONE ON EACH SIDE, SHE WOULD FEEL BETTER.
BUT WITH PATIENTS LIKE THIS, THE ISSUE ISN'T PHYSICAL, IT'S PSYCHOLOGICAL.
AS LONG AS THAT ISSUE REMAINS THE OUTCOME WILL BE THE SAME.
BUT I WAS INEXPERIENCED AS A DOCTOR THEN. SO I AGREED TO HER REQUEST.
OVER AND OVER.
AND WHAT DO YOU THINK HAPPENED?
YES... I ENDED UP TAKING NEARLY ALL OF HER RIBS OUT!
HONESTLY! I EXASPERATE EVEN MYSELF.
BUT I COULDN'T DO ANYTHING ABOUT IT.

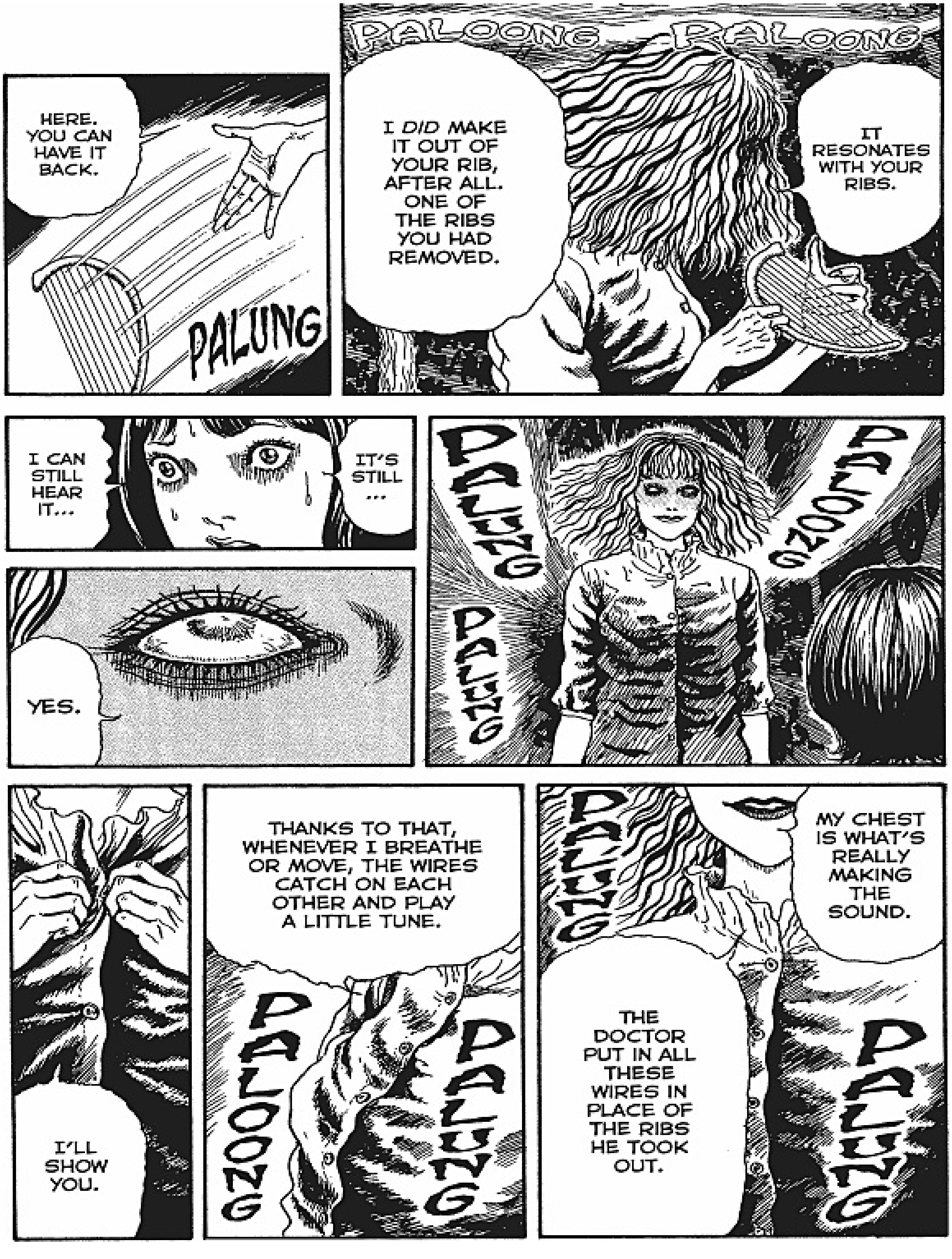

DR. KITAMURA TALKING BEFORE THE SURGERY...
...WAS THAT A HALLUCINATION FROM THE ANESTHETIC?
YES.
IT HAD TO HAVE BEEN.
HEY, DON'T YOU THINK YUKI'S LOOKING GREAT THESE DAYS?
THE FRONT-RUNNER FOR NEXT YEAR'S MISS NAKAYAMA-CHO.
HOWEVER...

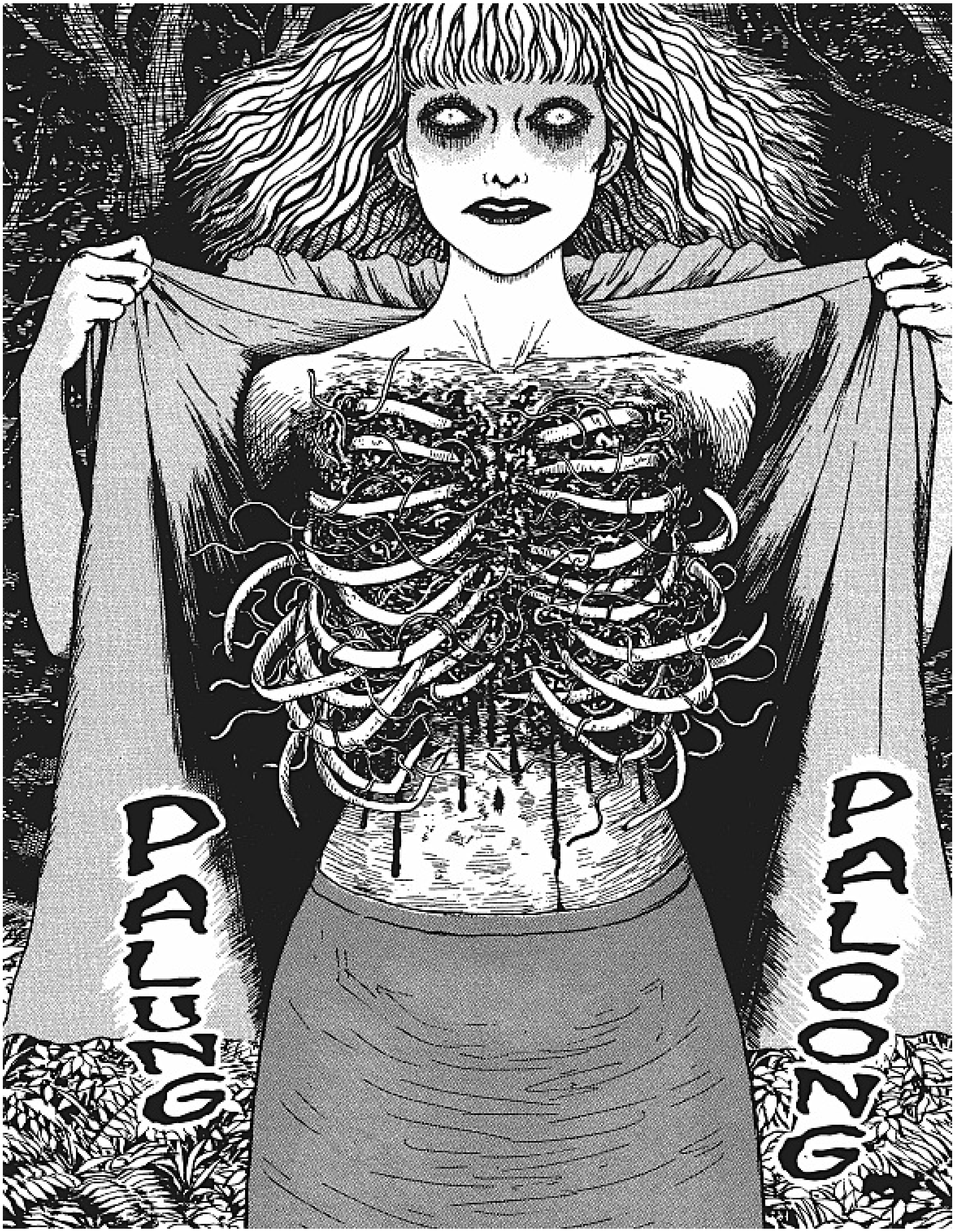

PALUNG
PALOOONG
PALUNG
PALUNG
PALUNG
PALUNG
AAH, I CAN HEAR IT AGAIN TONIGHT.
PALUNG
IT'S BEEN EVERY NIGHT SINCE I HAD THE SURGERY.
I FEEL LIKE THE MELODY AND SOUND ARE A LITTLE DIFFERENT FROM THE MUSIC RURIKO WAS SO SCARED OF.
BUT IT'S INCREDIBLY DISTURBING.
PALUNG
AND NOW... I FEEL IT IN MY CHEST IN THIS WEIRD WAY.
PALUNG
PALOOONG
IT ECHOES IN THE SCARS FROM MY SURGERY.
PALOOOONG
I...I CAN'T TAKE THIS ANYMORE...
PALOONG
KEISUKE...
KEISUKE!
KREEE
PALOONG
KEISUKE...

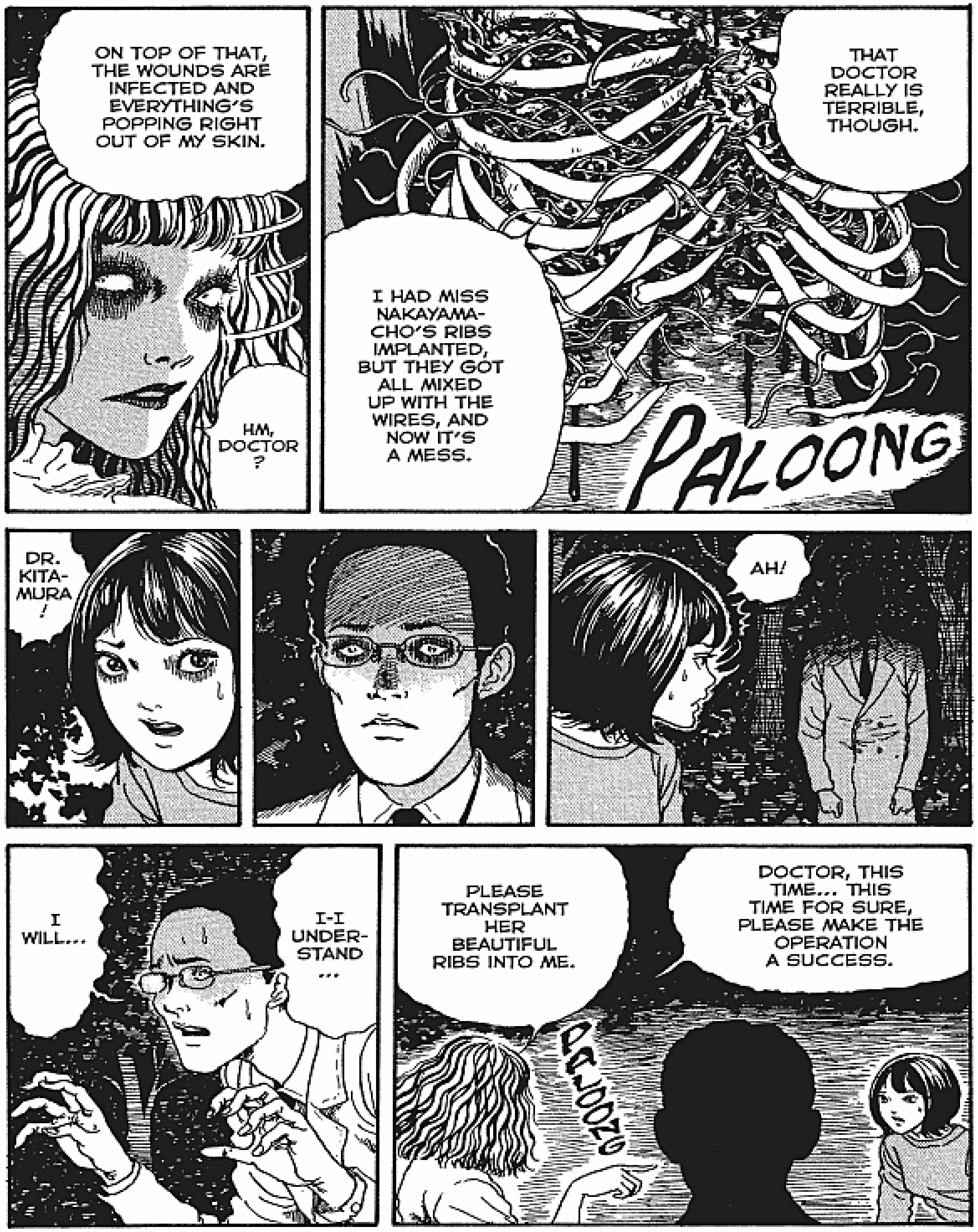

HEY... I CAN HEAR THIS MUSIC.
HEY, KEISUKE!
SHUT UP.
LEAVE ME ALONE.
...
PALOONG
PALOOOONG
I DON'T KNOW WHERE I WALKED OR FOR HOW LONG.
PALUNG
PALOONG
BEFORE I KNEW IT...
PALOOOONG
PALOOOONG
PALUNG
...I WAS IN THE WOODS.

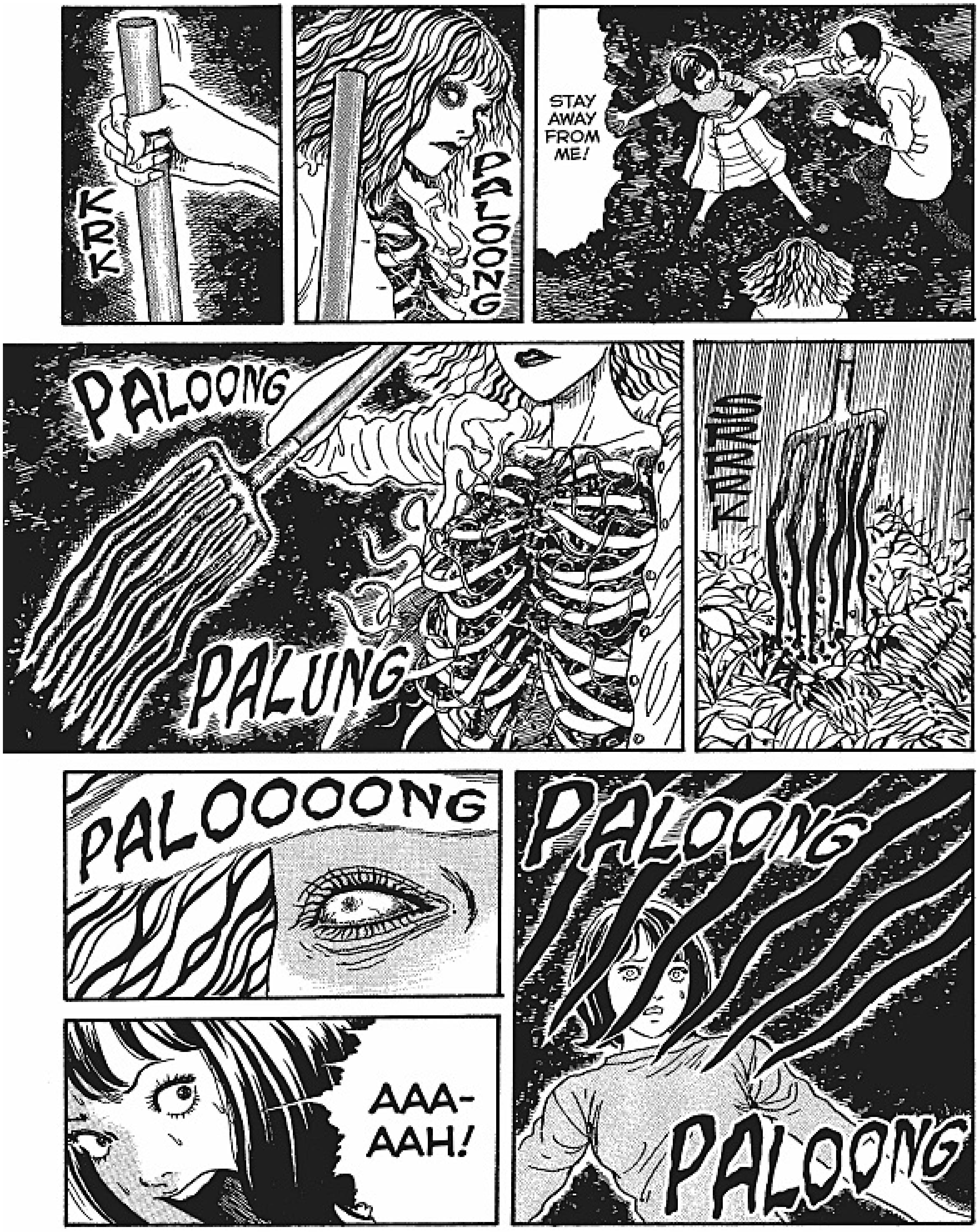

PALOOOOOONG
THE SOUND'S GETTING CLOSER...
IT'S THAT WOMAN... SHE'S CLOSE.
PALOOOONG
PALOONG
KRSH KRSH
PALOOOOOOONG
PALOOONG
PALUNG

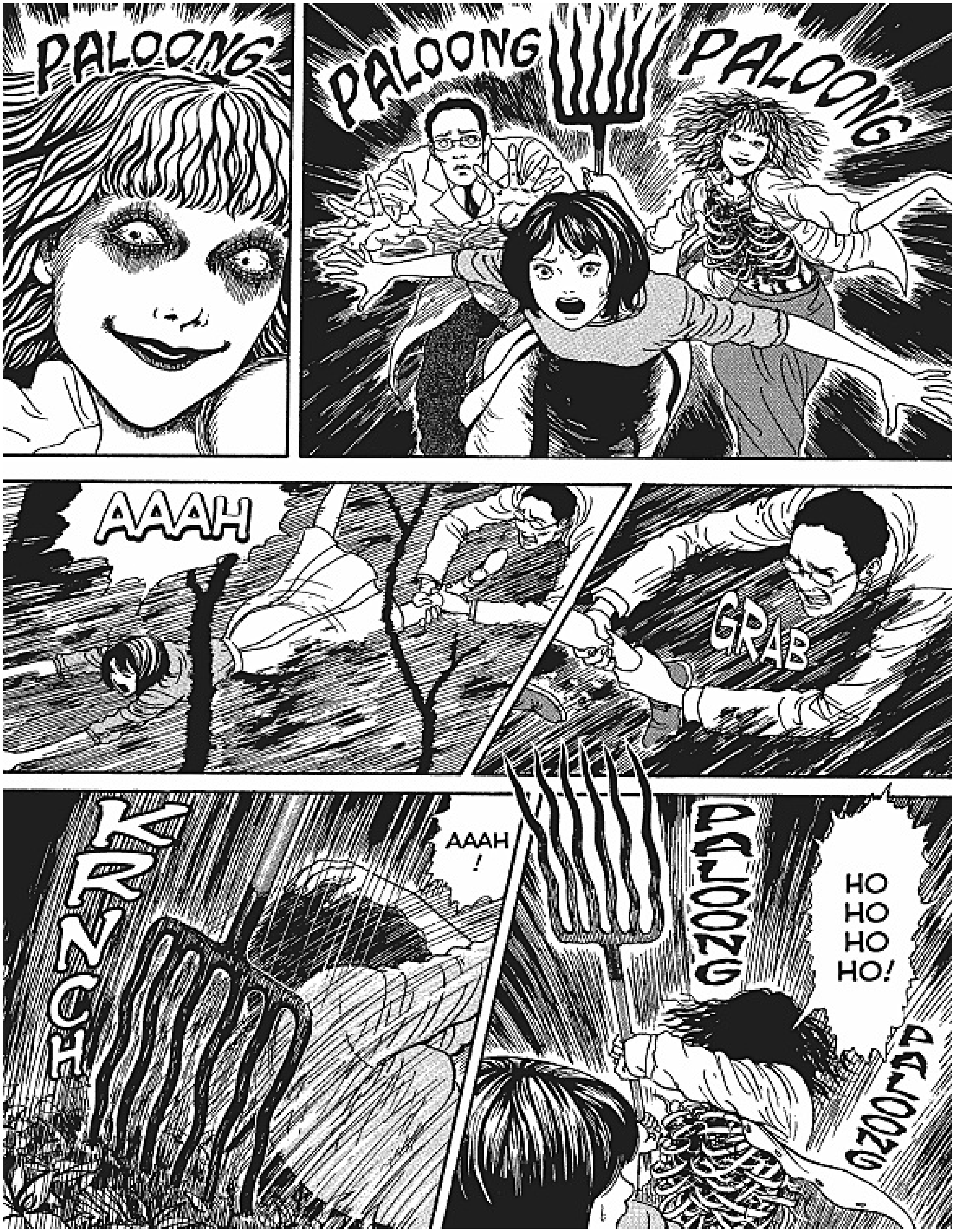

PALUNG
PALOOONG
PALOOOOONG
WH-WHO ON EARTH *ARE* YOU?!
PALUNG
AAAH!
HEH HEH HEH HEH!
PALUNG
PALUNG

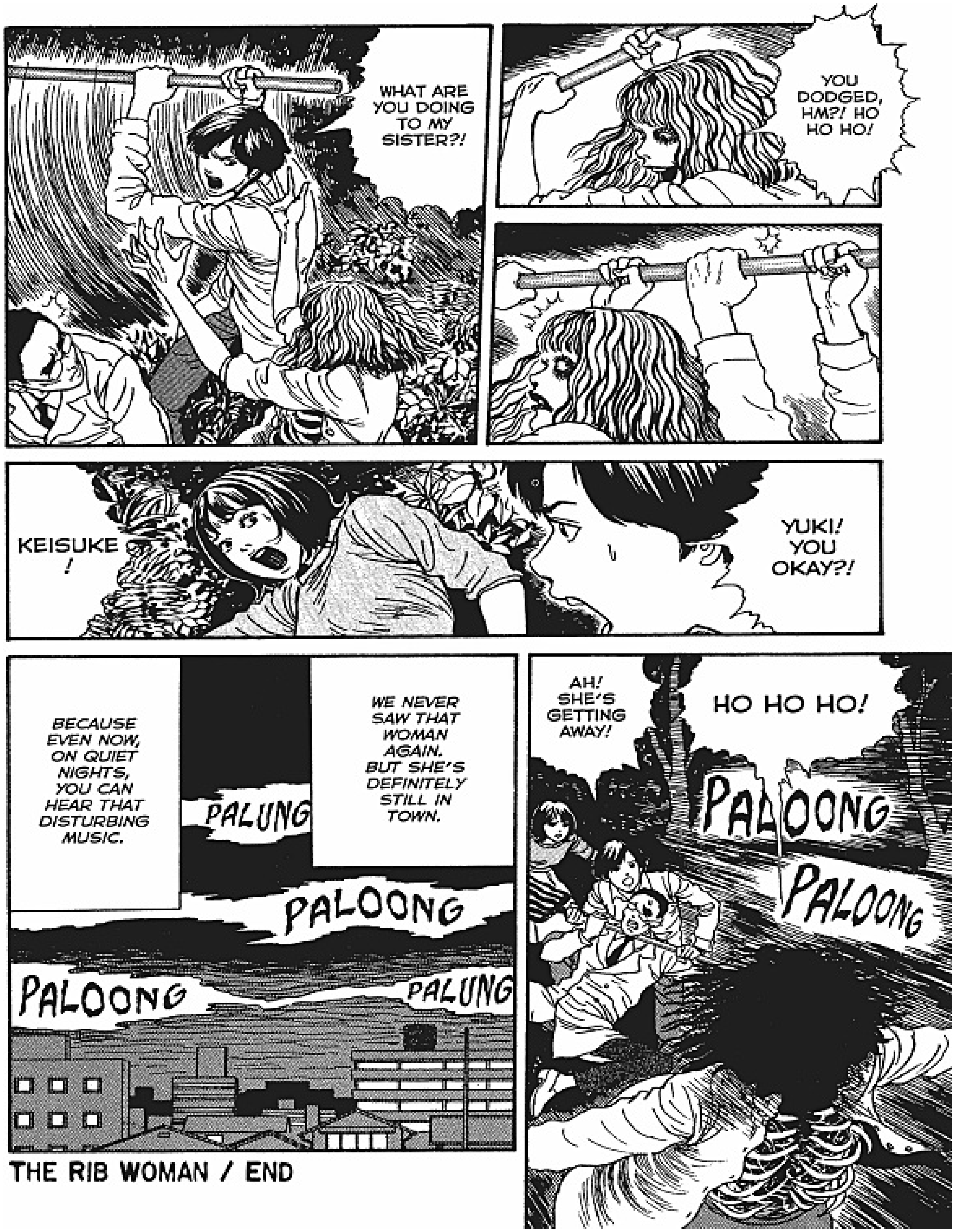

PALOONG PALOONG
IT RESONATES WITH YOUR RIBS.
I *DID* MAKE IT OUT OF YOUR RIB, AFTER ALL. ONE OF THE RIBS YOU HAD REMOVED.
HERE. YOU CAN HAVE IT BACK.
PALUNG
PALOONG
PALUNG
PALUNG
IT'S STILL ...
I CAN STILL HEAR IT...
YES.
PALUNG
MY CHEST IS WHAT'S REALLY MAKING THE SOUND.
THE DOCTOR PUT IN ALL THESE WIRES IN PLACE OF THE RIBS HE TOOK OUT.
PALUNG
PALUNG
PALOONG
THANKS TO THAT, WHENEVER I BREATHE OR MOVE, THE WIRES CATCH ON EACH OTHER AND PLAY A LITTLE TUNE.
I'LL SHOW YOU.


PALOONG
PALUNG


THAT DOCTOR REALLY IS TERRIBLE, THOUGH.
I HAD MISS NAKAYAMA-CHO'S RIBS IMPLANTED, BUT THEY GOT ALL MIXED UP WITH THE WIRES, AND NOW IT'S A MESS.
PALOONG
ON TOP OF THAT, THE WOUNDS ARE INFECTED AND EVERYTHING'S POPPING RIGHT OUT OF MY SKIN.
HM, DOCTOR?
AH!
DR. KITAMURA!
DOCTOR, THIS TIME... THIS TIME FOR SURE, PLEASE MAKE THE OPERATION A SUCCESS.
PLEASE TRANSPLANT HER BEAUTIFUL RIBS INTO ME.
PALOONG
I-I UNDERSTAND...
I WILL...


STAY AWAY FROM ME!
PALOONG
KRK
KEEES
PALOONG
PALUNG
PALOONG
PALOONG
PALOOOONG
AAA-AAH!

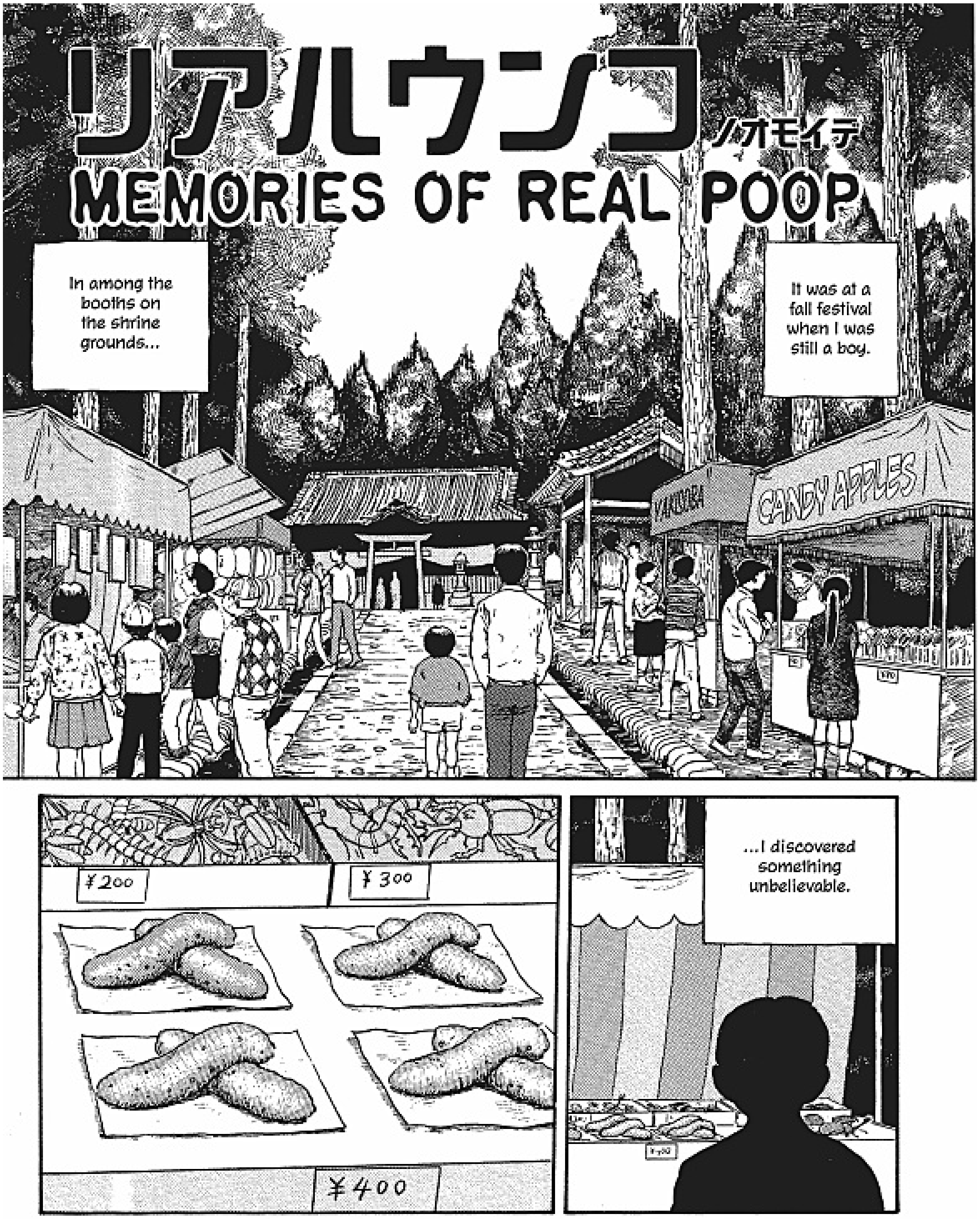

PALOONG
PALOONG
PALOONG
GRAB
AAAH
DALOONG
HO HO HO HO!
DALOONG
AAAH!
KRNCH

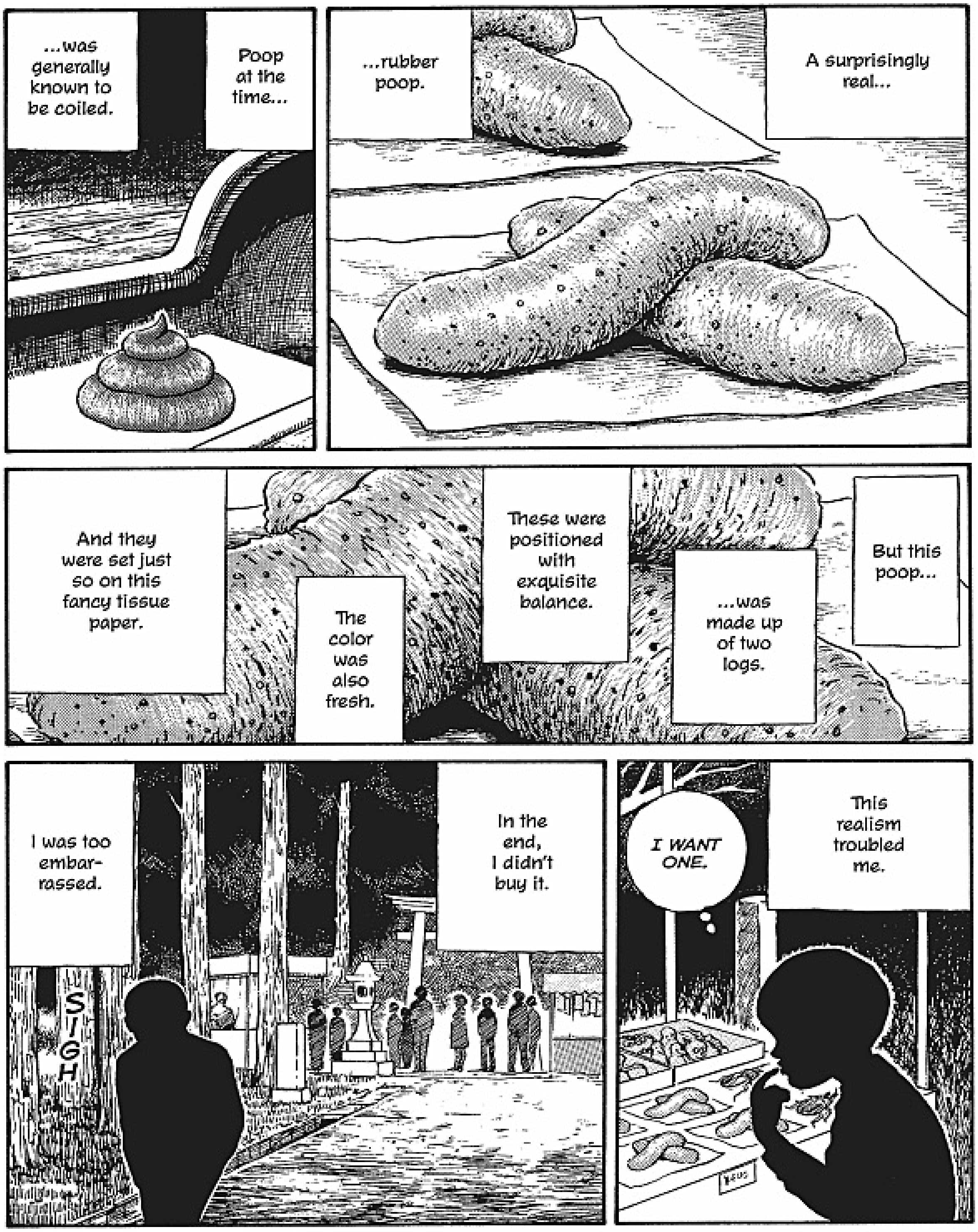

WHAT ARE YOU DOING TO MY SISTER?!
YOU DODGED, HM?! HO HO HO!
KEISUKE!
YUKI! YOU OKAY?!
AH! SHE'S GETTING AWAY!
HO HO HO!
PALOONG
PALOONG
WE NEVER SAW THAT WOMAN AGAIN. BUT SHE'S DEFINITELY STILL IN TOWN.
BECAUSE EVEN NOW, ON QUIET NIGHTS, YOU CAN HEAR THAT DISTURBING MUSIC.
PALUNG
PALOONG
PALOONG
PALUNG

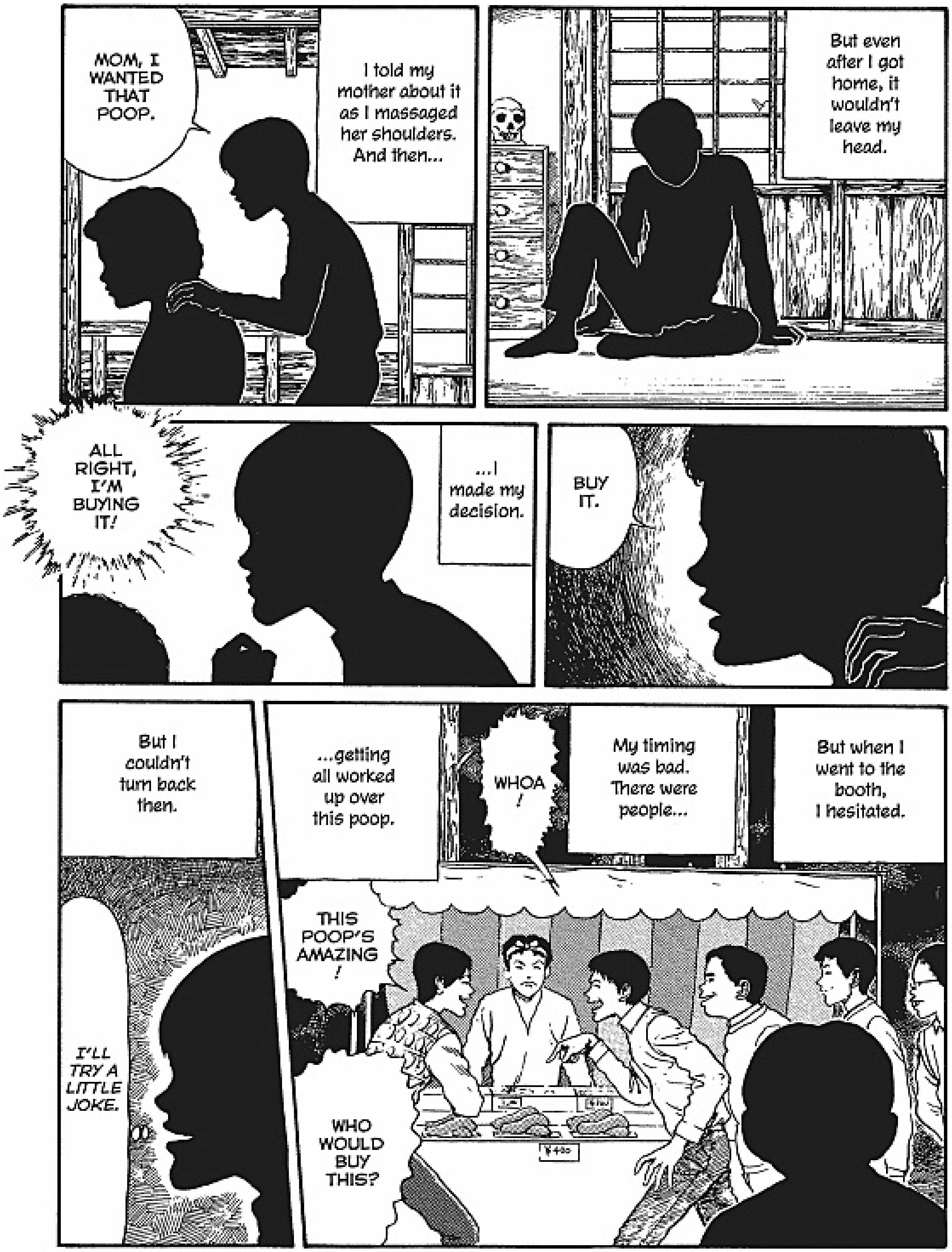
THE RIB WOMAN / END

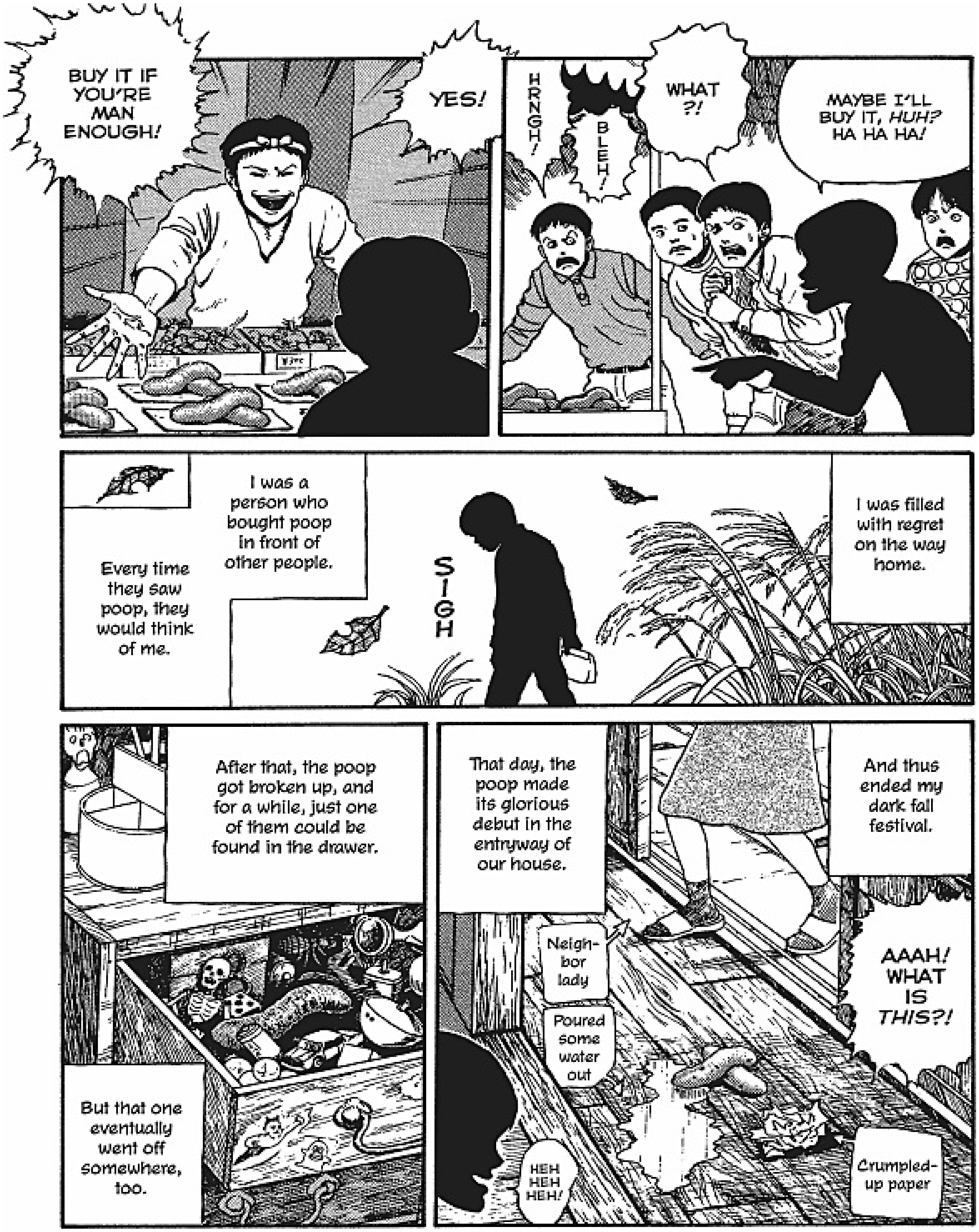
リアルウンコノオモイテ

MEMORIES OF REAL POOP

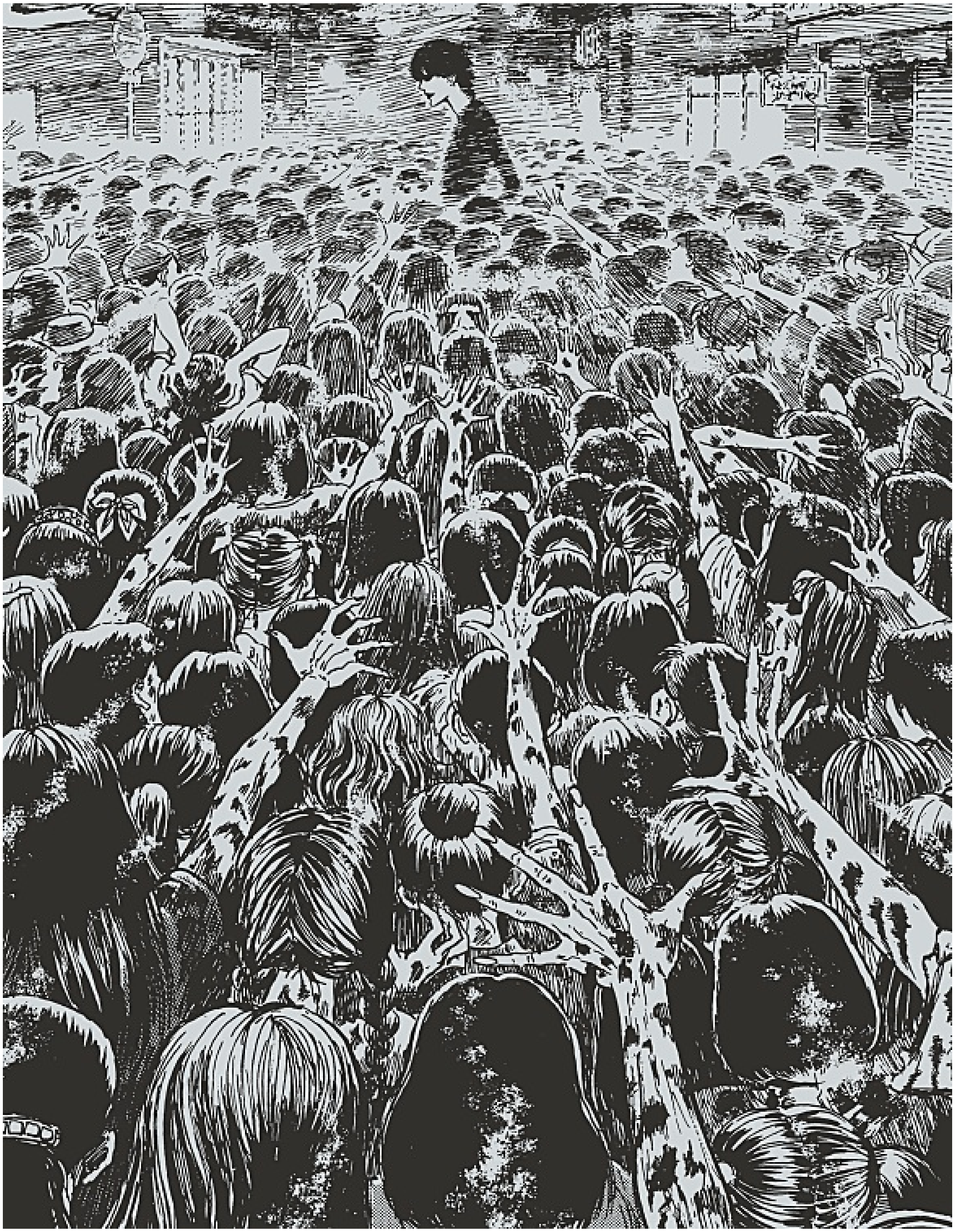

It was at a fall festival when I was still a boy.
In among the booths on the shrine grounds...
CANDY APPLES
YAKISOBA
...I discovered something unbelievable.
¥300
¥200
¥400

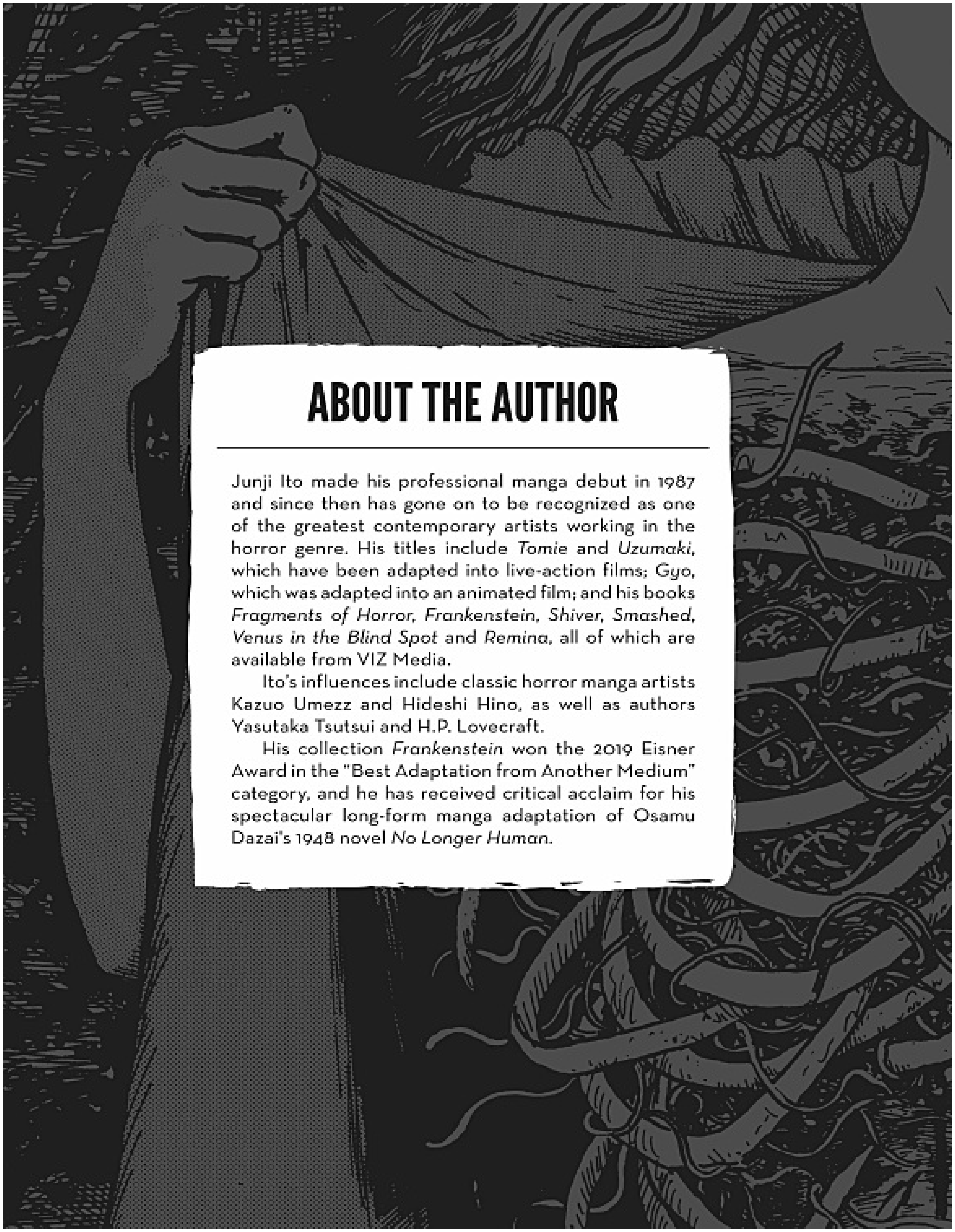

A surprisingly real...
...rubber poop.
Poop at the time...
...was generally known to be coiled.
But this poop...
...was made up of two logs.
These were positioned with exquisite balance.
The color was also fresh.
And they were set just so on this fancy tissue paper.
This realism troubled me.
I WANT ONE.
In the end, I didn't buy it.
I was too embarrassed.
SIGH


But even after I got home, it wouldn't leave my head.
I told my mother about it as I massaged her shoulders. And then...
MOM, I WANTED THAT POOP.
BUY IT.
...I made my decision.
ALL RIGHT, I'M BUYING IT!
But when I went to the booth, I hesitated.
My timing was bad. There were people...
WHOA!
THIS POOP'S AMAZING!
WHO WOULD BUY THIS?
...getting all worked up over this poop.
But I couldn't turn back then.
I'LL TRY A LITTLE JOKE.


BUY IT IF YOU'RE MAN ENOUGH!
YES!
HRNGH!
BLEH!
WHAT?!
MAYBE I'LL BUY IT, *HUH?* HA HA HA!
I was a person who bought poop in front of other people.
Every time they saw poop, they would think of me.
SIGH
I was filled with regret on the way home.
After that, the poop got broken up, and for a while, just one of them could be found in the drawer.
But that one eventually went off somewhere, too.
That day, the poop made its glorious debut in the entryway of our house.
And thus ended my dark fall festival.
Neighbor lady
Poured some water out
AAAH! WHAT IS *THIS?!*
HEH HEH HEH!
Crumpled-up paper

MEMORIES OF REAL POOP / END





ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Junji Ito made his professional manga debut in 1987 and since then has gone on to be recognized as one of the greatest contemporary artists working in the horror genre. His titles include *Tomie* and *Uzumaki*, which have been adapted into live-action films; *Gyo*, which was adapted into an animated film; and his books *Fragments of Horror*, *Frankenstein*, *Shiver*, *Smashed*, *Venus in the Blind Spot* and *Remina*, all of which are available from VIZ Media.

Ito's influences include classic horror manga artists Kazuo Umezz and Hideshi Hino, as well as authors Yasutaka Tsutsui and H.P. Lovecraft.

His collection *Frankenstein* won the 2019 Eisner Award in the "Best Adaptation from Another Medium" category, and he has received critical acclaim for his spectacular long-form manga adaptation of Osamu Dazai's 1948 novel *No Longer Human*.

Lovesickness

JUNJI ITO STORY COLLECTION

Story & Art by Junji Ito

Ito Junji Kessakushu 4: Shibito no koi wazurai
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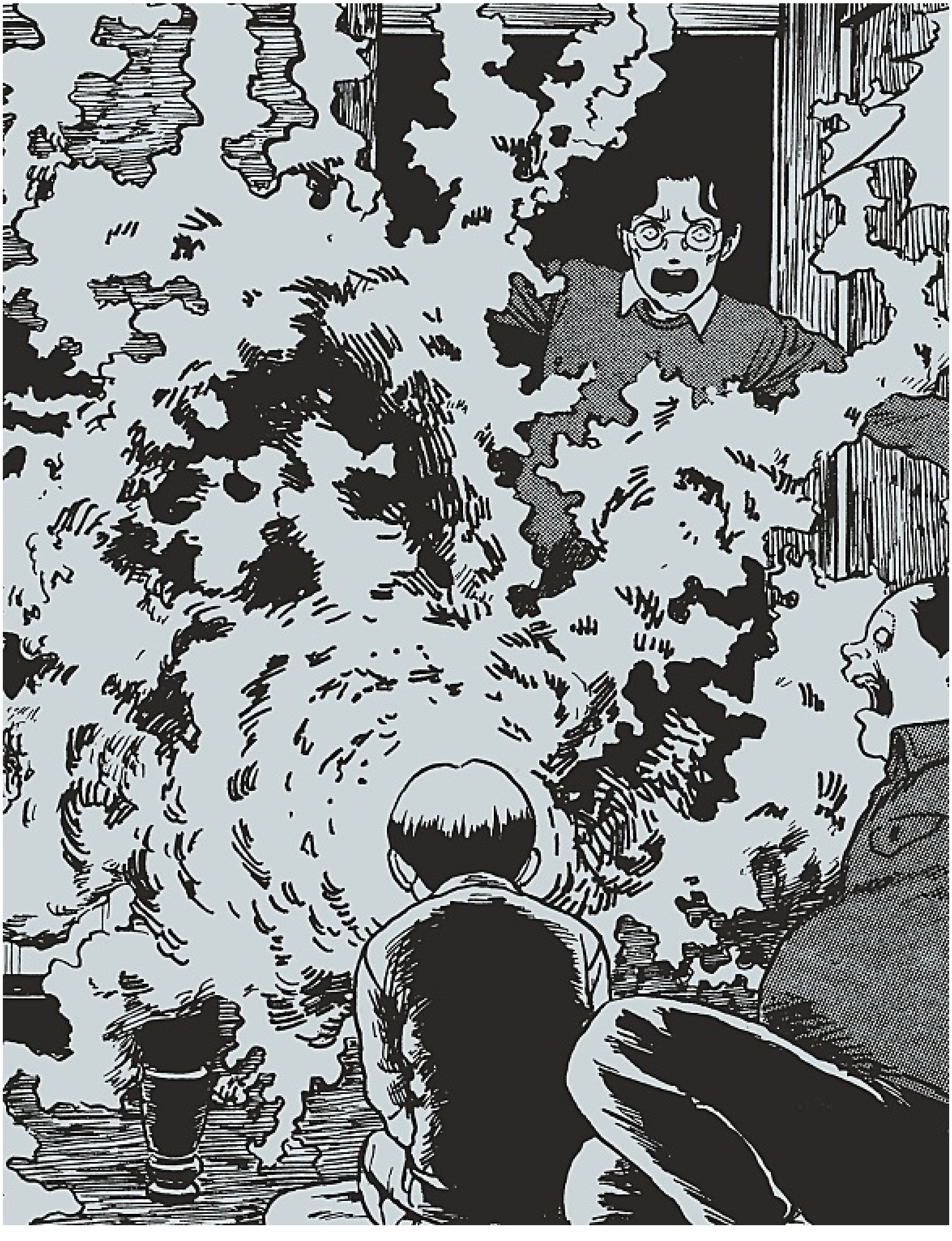

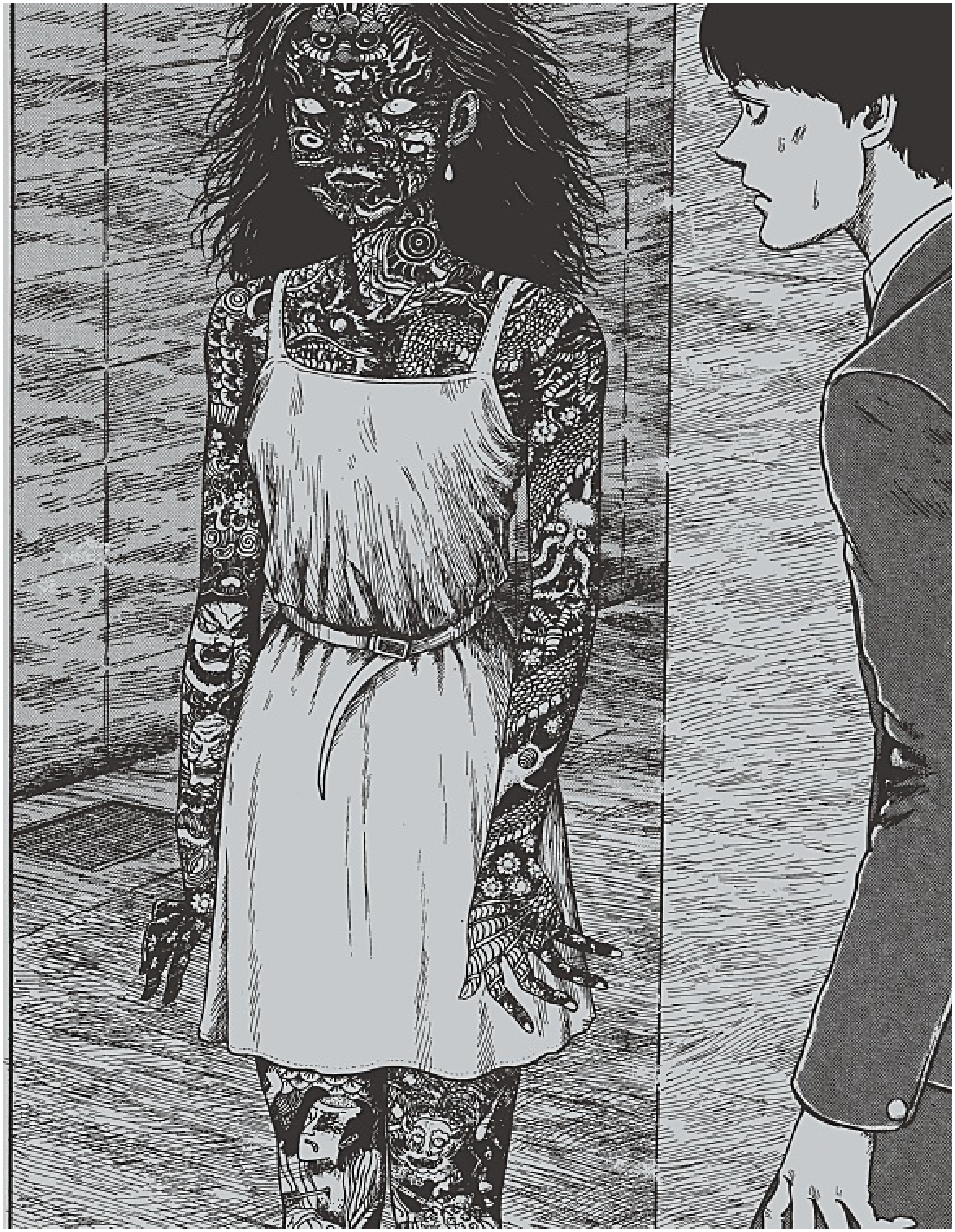

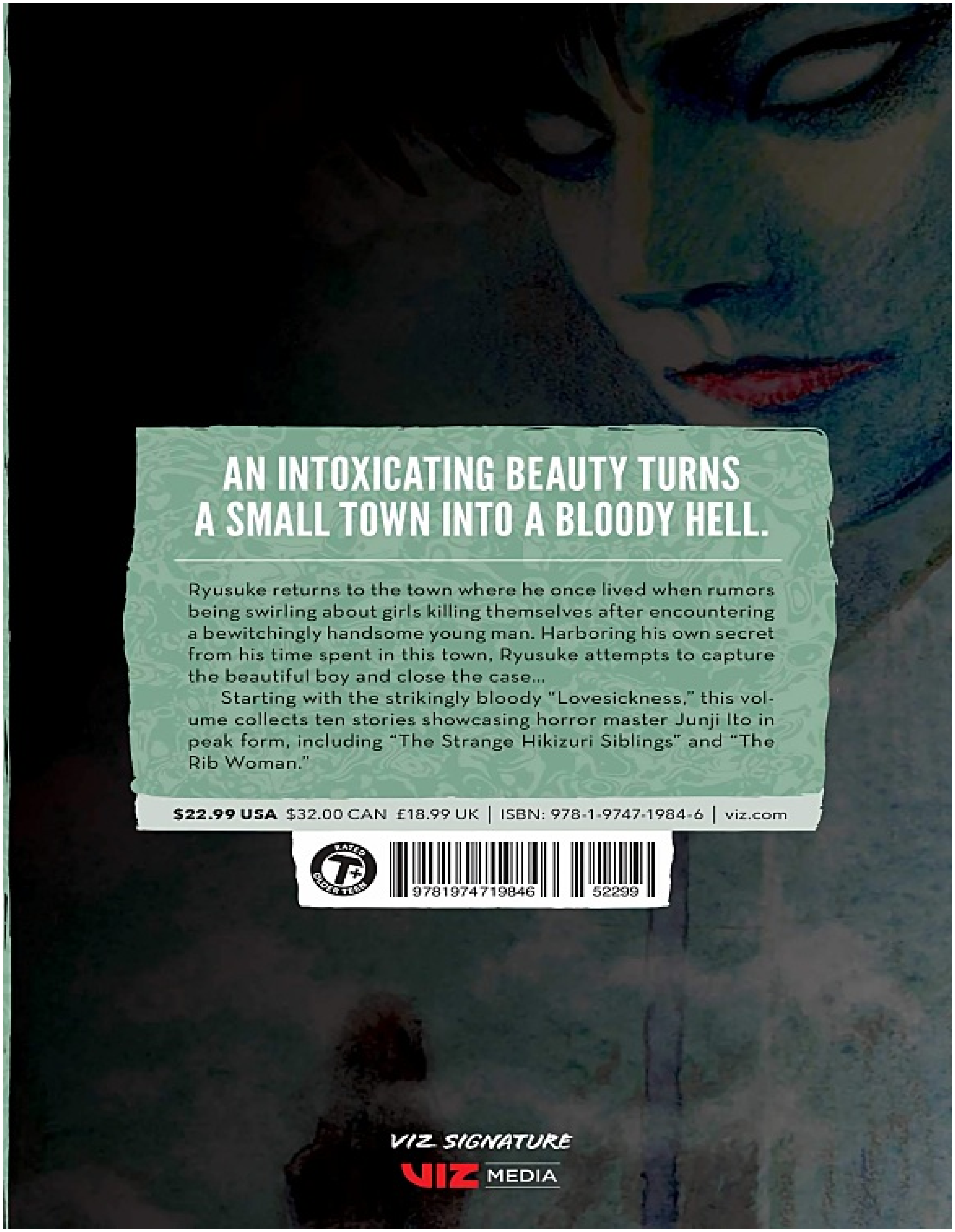

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